

THE COLLAPSE OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE BOSNIAN WAR:
THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION IN
A REGIONAL CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

The Collapse of Yugoslavia and the Bosnian War:

The Impact of International Intervention in a Regional Conflict

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This thesis examines the role of international intervention in the area formerly known as Yugoslavia during its collapse in the first half of the 1990s (1991-1995). The Cold War had just ended, and the United Nations (UN), NATO, and the nations they represented were reevaluating their roles in a world without competition between two superpowers. The collapse of Yugoslavia and ensuing civil war presented these international bodies with an opportunity to intervene and show that they were ready to take charge in future conflicts in pursuing and achieving peace. However, what followed revealed them to be short-sighted and ill-prepared for this role as the conflict quickly escalated leading to genocide again taking place in Europe.

The country of Bosnia, which emerged as its own nation in the collapse of Yugoslavia, will receive special interest due to its place as the geographic and active center of most of the war and atrocities. The United States will also be examined in detail since it eventually played a key role in achieving peace with the Dayton Peace Accords.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the intervention in Bosnia and former Yugoslavia was implemented well. After examining primary documents from the United States, the UN, NATO and other organizations, as well as secondary documents in the form of journal articles and books, it became clear that the intentions of these groups were good, but their abilities in achieving peace were not. Many leaders were highly influenced by prior experiences in either World War II or Vietnam which made it difficult for them to see this new conflict in a different light. Thus, it was only when key figures in leadership changed that the situation in Bosnia was turned around and peace became attainable. Unfortunately, this peace was only achieved after hundreds of thousands had died and millions had been displaced creating a difficult rebuilding and reunifying process for those that remained or returned following Dayton.

Keywords: Bosnian War, international intervention, genocide, foreign policy, Cold War, Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, Yugoslavia,

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“Those who practice diplomacy need constantly to be reminded of the human damage their efforts, or lack of them, can cause.” – Warren Zimmerman, last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia

“All that is necessary for evil to triumph in the world is for good people to do nothing.” - Edmund Burke

INTRODUCTION

*Aggression is the name we give to the crime of war. We know the crime because of our knowledge of the peace it interrupts—not the mere absence of fighting, but peace-with-rights, a condition of liberty and security that can exist only in the absence of aggression itself. The wrong the aggressor commits is to force men and women to risk their lives for the sake of their rights. It is to confront them with the choice: your rights or (some of) your lives!*¹ – Michael Walzer

The country of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bosnia) is a young and predominantly unknown nation in the United States. It lies to the east of the Adriatic Sea and is made up of slightly less acreage than the state of West Virginia. Despite its small size, Bosnia became the focus of the world's attention between 1992 and 1995 as forces conspired to destroy its multiethnic configuration. This led to the international community inserting itself into the ordeal in order to try to stop the bloodshed, and it set the stage for the United Nations, NATO, the United States, and the European Community (EU) to reevaluate their roles following the end of the Cold War. Far from a perfect intervention, the ensuing war and peace negotiations revealed the weaknesses of international intervention as negotiations floundered and hundreds of thousands of Bosnians died. This paper will critique the responses of the UN, NATO, and the U.S. to the collapse of Yugoslavia and the war in Bosnia in order to facilitate a better understanding of what went wrong. The intervention was largely a failed effort with success only coming four years after the war began, and it took a number of changes in leadership and tactics along with a major tragedy in order to achieve that success.

Intervention by the international community under the United Nations and NATO in the Bosnian War has been viewed as a major success for those who helped end the violence. However, the United Nations failed to act quickly, and severely, in punishing the aggressors of the conflict. Failing to do so allowed the situation to whirl out of control and genocide once

¹ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 51.

again took place on European soil. A general lack of understanding of the differing cultures represented by the opposing sides of the conflict also led to many poor decisions being made throughout the process. Peace was achieved, but the cost was high to the inhabitants of all the republics of former Yugoslavia, and especially Bosnia, due to the warring which took place on the part of the international community. This is why the United States and its international allies in the UN and NATO must not linger only on the good that came out of the conflict. Their successes, as well as their failures, must be investigated in order to ensure that any future conflicts like this one will not share the same fate.

The first focus of this paper will be to examine the role of the international community in its attempt to bring peace to the region. Despite eventually achieving peace, the process by which that peace was achieved was riddled with mistakes over far too long a period of time. Promises were made and broken. Aggressors were rewarded to the bereavement of their victims. Even the final peace which was achieved at the Dayton Peace Accords in December of 1995 can be scrutinized for allowing some of the greatest protagonists of the violence a seat at the table adding legitimacy to their rule despite the crimes that had been perpetrated under their leadership. Therefore the international community, especially the members of the United Nations, holds some responsibility for what transpired in former Yugoslavia. The greatest tragedy is that they had the power to act and while they eventually achieved great success, they did not respond soon enough.

Secondly, there will be a focus on the role of the United States and the way in which its leadership in the 1990s handled intervention. The collapse and beginning of hostilities in Yugoslavia began during President George H.W. Bush's tenure in office and continued into Bill

Clinton's—making it a relevant topic of debate during the 1992 election and in each of the administrations. Thus, both administrations must be examined carefully.

The U.S. was also in a unique position following the end of the Cold War. The buildup of arms during the Cold War had given the U.S. great military might and a huge international presence. In addition, this was the first instance in which a regional conflict in Europe was spiraling out of control, and the European members of the UN desired to take the lead. Both presidents of the U.S. were willing to yield to Europe in this situation since the U.S. no longer possessed any national interests in former Yugoslavia outside of those it shared with the UN in keeping the general peace. However, prior to the Cold War ending the situation might have looked different as Yugoslavia had previously been of great interest to the U.S. as a Communist nation that had chosen not to align with Stalin or his Soviet heirs. But the collapse of the Soviet Union took away that one advantage it held, thus, lessening U.S. interest.

Grace must also be given to the international community. The situation was more complicated than do something or do nothing. The Cold War had just ended. The United States and other Western powers were redefining their functions without the existence of a second superpower in the world. Getting involved with a conflict, especially an overseas one could be politically dangerous, and there were many other complexities involved. However, the fact remained that war in Yugoslavia was in no person or country's best interest, least of all the citizens of the six republics. Therefore, more attention should have been given to the events leading up to the war in the form of diplomacy and ensuring different voices would be heard in order to try to stave off disaster.

In summary, the Bosnian War and its conclusion have been viewed as a major success for those who mediated and helped end the violence. Nevertheless, the errors made should not be

excluded from the record by what was ultimately accomplished with the end of the war.

Mistakes were made, and it is the responsibility of the nations which ultimately helped end the war to recognize those mistakes and learn from them in order to ensure that history does not repeat itself again. Thus, this paper will stand as a testament to the successes and failures of the international community, and specifically the UN and U.S., with the intention of bringing out a clearer understanding of how international groups and the U.S. might respond in the future to assure peace and action under similar circumstances.

Context and Overview

Prior to 1992, Bosnia had not experienced national independence since losing it in 1527 BCE to the Ottoman Empire. For the next 465 years, Bosnia was subject to the rise and fall of empires pulling its strings. Due to the Slavic origin of its population, Bosnia was clumped in with the other ethnic-Slavs in the Balkans in what would eventually be named the Kingdom of Yugoslavia at the end of World War I and again in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia following World War II.² In both the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the communist federation of Yugoslavia, Bosnia existed as its own republic under first a monarch and then a strong, centralized government. Yet throughout these 465 years, the people of Bosnia adapted and added to their culture many aspects of all those empires that ruled them. This identity would reach its apex in the form of nationalistic fervor in the years leading up to declaring independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in December of 1991. However, what should have been a time for celebration became a burden instead, as external and internal forces combined to tear the country apart.

² Despite sharing a similar ethnic heritage, Bosnia and the other states of Yugoslavia possessed many differences including their religions and culture.

Conflict over the future form of Yugoslavia quickly escalated to violence. Negotiations broke down between the republics and those who remained unaffiliated with either side of the conflict were eventually forced to choose between the two. Bosnia, the greatest example of a multiethnic republic prior to the fighting, became the center of the worst atrocities as ethnic tensions were encouraged by those saying heterogeneous societies could never work. Leaders promoting homogeneous societies brought war to Bosnia soil, and from this point on ending the war in Yugoslavia became synonymous with ending the war in Bosnia.

Amidst the fighting that took place within Bosnia between 1992 and 1995, both soldiers and civilians were killed. Many died in battle, but the large majority of casualties were victims of a genocide perpetrated by bigoted leaders in pursuit of their own homogeneous societies. They facilitated this by using historical accounts of past wrongs committed against their specific ethnic group provoking those that were more radical to commit some of the worst crimes against humanity in Europe since World War II. These included genocide, systematic rape, and detention camps. The most egregious example of genocide occurred in Srebrenica, a United Nations declared “safe zone” where conservative estimates stated more than 8,000 Muslim men and boys were massacred in a matter of days. It was in the wake of these tragedies that spectators began to recall the horrific acts of the Holocaust as human beings were again rounded up and executed in mass on European soil. That genocide could again take place in Europe was difficult to comprehend, yet what was even more incomprehensible was that the United Nations was present from the beginning with the goal of finding a peaceful solution.

The collapse of Yugoslavia, and the horrific acts committed by the different sides, set the stage for a redefining of international law and order. The Soviet Union had only recently collapsed, and the United States, NATO, and the United Nations were determining what their

roles would be without the existence of a second superpower in the world. Each of their actions in Bosnia would be a testament to how future crises might play out. In this conflict, the U.S. and the countries represented by the UN and NATO pursued a cooperative effort to achieve peace, with the Europeans taking the lead. Unfortunately this led to a drawn out engagement and the questioning of UN policy-making in crisis situations.

The questioning of the UN derived in part from dissatisfaction regarding the depth and duration in which abuses were allowed to continue. Prior to war breaking out or independence from Yugoslavia being claimed by any of the republics, Helsinki Watch (now known as Human Rights Watch³) recommended in its 1990 World Report “that economic sanctions be used against the federal government of Yugoslavia and, when possible, against the government of the republic of Serbia” due to its involvement “in egregious human rights abuses in the province of Kosovo⁴.” The report also highlighted the situation in Croatia and the other republics as potential sites of future “explosive human rights situations.”⁵ This report could not have been more accurate.

Dissatisfaction also derived from the clarity and accessibility of events taking place in Bosnia to those outside the country and region of Bosnia, specifically the political leaders of the international community, as “no other atrocity campaign in the twentieth century was better monitored and understood by the U.S. government” and its allies in the UN and NATO.⁶ The citizens of the US and UN nations could watch events unfold and even listen to them in near real

³ As an internationally respected and cited nongovernmental organization (NGO) created in 1978, the Human Rights Watch investigates potential human rights abuses firsthand in order to bring those responsible for abuses to justice.

⁴ Kosovo was uniquely Yugoslavian existing as its own autonomous province during Tito’s rule with about ninety percent of the region being ethnically Albanian and Muslim and the other ten percent being ethnically Serb and Orthodox Christian. It is landlocked sharing borders with Albania, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. War would break out here following the war in Bosnia.

⁵ Human Rights Watch, HRW.org - http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1990/WR90/HELSINKI.BOU-05.htm#P714_157941 (Accessed April 25, 2011).

⁶ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 264.

time during the war. In doing so, both leaders and the public at large were forced to ask themselves “how much human suffering are we prepared to watch before we intervene?”⁷ The record of the Bosnian War revealed that sum of human suffering to be high.

Historiography

The breadth of literature about the collapse of Yugoslavia and the Bosnian War is still in its infancy as new details continue to emerge about this period. The New York Times offered great coverage of the conflict as it panned out in Yugoslavia. As a prestigious newspaper, it represented the information the American public had access to in its reporting of local, national, and international news. It also presented a good timeline of events. Coupled with books and journal articles from a wide spectrum of journals which have focused on the explanation of the conflict and its roots, the larger conflict in Yugoslavia and the specific violence in Bosnia can be brought to a greater understanding. What is certain is that the international community should have intervened in a more radical fashion earlier in the conflict in order to avoid the humanitarian crisis and war that followed. Instead they spent months, then years, debating what the right course of action would be while the situation became direr.

There are two historiographical debates which exist regarding the Bosnian War. The first debate is over who deserves blame in and for the war itself of the three sides involved: Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian.⁸ In this debate, one argument holds that the Serbs deserve all blame for what happened and anything done by the Croatian or Bosnian sides was in response to an action by the Serbs. The other side of the argument is that each ethnic group shares some blame since

⁷ Walzer, xii.

⁸ Both Franjo Tudjman, the leader of Croatia, and Slobodan Milosevic, the leader of Serbia and Montenegro, pursued the possibility of taking parts of Bosnia for themselves in their pursuit of ethnically homogeneous nations. Thus, even though the worst of the fighting began in Croatia, an eventual stalemate between Serbian and Croatian forces there led to the fighting spilling over and intensifying in Bosnia where Bosnian Muslims were added into the mix.

each group at some point committed actions outside the rules of war and humanity against the “others,” and none of them were initially willing to yield at the negotiating table. This is the debate that is most fiercely contested between the ethnic groups of Bosnia today as they look back on the events of the Bosnian War and try to make sense of what happened and why.

The second debate is the positive or negative role that the international community in the form of the United Nations played in brokering a peace agreement and bringing the war in Bosnia to its end. Since the war ended, there have been numerous books and articles that have critiqued how events transpired and what could have been done differently, and overwhelmingly the role of the international community is viewed in a negative light. Thus, the debate is less over whether the UN had a positive or negative role, and instead is focused on the degree to which the international community contributed to the creation of a prolonged and muddled peace brokering and whether more action should or could have been taken. The debate also takes into account the role of the U.S.—both in its position as the sole superpower and in whether it could have done more to negotiate a change in UN policy. It is the argument of this paper that the United Nations handled intervention poorly until it was pushed by the Clinton administration to respond to Serbian aggression with force. Therefore, Clinton and his advisors deserve some praise for finally pursuing a harsher response when terms were broken; however, both the U.S. and the UN remain guilty of failing to act with such force earlier. This failure to act is what allowed hostilities to increase among all three ethnic groups and nations, and it only became worse as the aggressors became ever more emboldened by UN inaction.

Since this paper primarily focuses on the international community in the form of the U.S., the EC, the UN and NATO, the second historiographical debate is of principal concern. However, it is important to state that this paper holds that the Serbs, and specifically the Bosnian

Serbs and military under the control of President Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic in Bosnia, were the primary perpetrators of the war in Bosnia, though not the exclusive participants in crimes committed against humanity.

In identifying specific problems in international intervention, one must first realize that determining international policy is no easy thing when delving into a new situation that is different from any other that has ever taken place before. There were many individual countries and international groups that had a hand in determining policy for brokering a peace settlement. This made it difficult to come to decisive actions quickly. Further complicating matters, the collapse of Yugoslavia presented a new and frightening challenge for the UN, especially as war broke out first in Slovenia and Croatia and only then spread to Bosnia. The purposes set forth by the UN charter clearly demonstrated that the UN had an obligation to act in order “to maintain international peace and security,” and it was quick to involve itself in the peace process because of this. However, what took place following this initial response is where the debate over just how poorly the situation in Bosnia was handled begins.

The War in Bosnia lasted almost four years with hundreds of thousands of lives lost, the country’s infrastructure almost entirely destroyed, and many of the worst atrocities taking place late in the peace process. Thus, it is easy for one to understand why the international community has taken criticism for its role there. Out of this criticism come different views over just how strongly fault should rest on the UN and whether others, like the U.S., deserve to be grouped in with the UN as well.

The firmest proponent for placing most of the fault on the UN and all of the “West” is David Rieff, a New York journalist, author and policy analyst. He states that, “Bosnia was and always will be a just cause. It should have been the West’s cause. To have intervened on the

side of Bosnia would have been self-defense, not charity.”⁹ He takes this even further when he says that:

What has taken place in Bosnia has revealed the bankruptcy of every European security institution, from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to the Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe, exposed the fact that nowhere in these great structures was there either intellectual preparedness or moral fortitude for dealing with the crises of the post-Cold War world or for coming to terms with the likelihood that in the future a great many wars will take place not between states but within states.¹⁰

Thus, according to Rieff, the international community’s leadership failed to understand the changing world which allowed for it to be completely unprepared for engagements like Bosnia.

Warren Zimmerman, the United States’ last ambassador to Yugoslavia before its demise, took a slightly less firm stance on the failure of the international community than Rieff in his book Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and its Destroyers. In the book he places blame on the UN, NATO and the U.S. for how peace was pursued, but he also points to the leaders of the republics and ethnic parties as the main protagonists in destroying their own nations.

Another side of the debate considers the specific role of the United States. Samantha Power, a journalist at the time of the Bosnian War, examined the response of the US to the acts of genocide which took place in former Yugoslavia and elsewhere in the world. In her research, she became critical of the US leadership saying that

the personalities and geopolitical constraints influencing U.S. decision-making have shifted with time, but the United States has consistently refused to take risks in order to suppress genocide. The United States is not alone. The states bordering genocidal societies and the European powers have looked away as well. Despite broad public consensus that genocide should “never again” be allowed, and a good deal of triumphalism about the ascent of liberal democratic values, the last decade of the twentieth century was one of the most deadly in the grimmest century on record.”¹¹

10. ⁹ David Rieff, *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995),

¹⁰ Ibid, 22.

¹¹ Power, 503.

Essentially, little had changed since World War II in terms of effective international intervention in conflicts, and the U.S. especially needed to be held accountable for having the power to act but not doing so until it was too late.

Similar to Power's position, Wayne Bert, a former policy analyst for the Defense Department, took a critical look at U.S. involvement and determined that the U.S. had a duty to take the lead yet forfeited that duty in the interests of its relationship with the other members of the UN and NATO. This then led to a prolonged engagement. In his book, The Reluctant Superpower, he criticized the international community in the form of the UN and its European members for their failure to resolve the war while leading the peace process. Bert also detailed some of the good ideas that the U.S. leadership had and failed to promote strongly enough in order to show that the U.S. was complicit in the initial failure of the peace process.

The final individual who demonstrated a unique perspective on the role of the U.S. in the Bosnian War was Richard Holbrooke. Holbrooke served as U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Europe between 1994 and 1996 and brokered the Dayton Peace Accords in Ohio. In his book, To End A War, he considered the role of the U.S. in a more positive light by looking at what was achieved to bring the war to an end. According to his experience, Europe and the UN achieved little in their negotiating which only made the Serb aggressors act more boldly in defying the UN's peacekeeping mission. The U.S. leadership then took a risk by taking over the negotiation process. That risk paid off, and Holbrooke praised the U.S. leadership for its willingness to act in achieving a final peace settlement at Dayton. However, he also pointed out that this action came too late and that there was a certain amount of luck involved in the outcome.

The most comprehensive book on U.S. foreign policy throughout the 1990s came from Pulitzer Prize-winning author, journalist and historian David Halberstam in his book War in a

Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals. No other writer better understood the inner workings of Presidents Bush and Clinton and their staff. Much of his work stemmed from personal interviews with the individuals themselves, and the book gave a very detailed account of the complexity of the situation that the collapse of Yugoslavia and ensuing war represented. The details did not distract from an incredible understanding of the big picture either. Bosnia was a major focus of foreign policy for the U.S., but it was not the only one. Halberstam approached the roles of the two U.S. administrations and their European counterparts in the UN and NATO in terms of where they placed foreign policy as a priority. He then broke down how that was changed by the individuals that were making the decisions throughout the 1990s and how events affected them. According to Halberstam, there were no larger than life individuals that single-handedly ended the war. There were merely the right and wrong people for getting the job done, and the presidents, their civilian staff, and their military staff only found those people through trial and error.

Other individuals writing about the conflict did so without focusing on the negative or positive aspects of international intervention. Instead, they merely detailed many of the major events of Yugoslavia's collapse and the Bosnian War. The first of these was Noel Malcolm, an English historian, writer and columnist who has devoted himself to Bosnia and currently chairs the Board of Trustees for the Bosnian Institute.¹² As a foreign advocate of Bosnia and its people, Malcolm addressed the history well in giving his readers perspective on Bosnia's history with the emphasis being on education about the country and its origins. His insight gave the war historical context rather than just describing the war as a lone event in time.

¹² The Bosnian Institute is a key organization internationally in providing education and information on the history and culture of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a special concern for the past and present development of its social, economic, governmental, legal and cultural conditions, organizations and institutions. Through its programmes it actively encourages and supports the growth of a pluralist democratic society in Bosnia-Herzegovina and its neighbours. - Citation from Bosnian Institute Website's 'About Us' Page, <http://www.bosnia.org.uk/>

The final figure that bears mentioning in the historiography of the Bosnian War is Misha Glenny. Glenny is a British journalist who traveled between the republics as Yugoslavia fell apart and actually met many of the major figures in person during his travels and he has made his career writing about the Balkans. In both The Balkans and The Fall of Yugoslavia, Glenny breaks down all the republics of former Yugoslavia and the nations that surrounded them in order to better understand the histories of each place. In The Fall of Yugoslavia he does this best in looking at the different leaders involved in the conflict and defending Bosnia due to its location between the two larger perpetrators, Croatia and Serbia, but not absolving it of some of the guilt. Glenny's personal experience helped him contribute greatly to the history of Bosnia and the Balkans at large.

Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia all had a hand in the destruction of Bosnia, but the Serbian and Bosnian Serb leadership, and to a lesser extent the Croatian leadership, committed the majority of offenses in perpetrating crimes on the Bosnian civilian population and repeatedly defied the international community and the peace negotiations. It also holds that the United Nations committed a great number of blunders—the worst of which was allowing for the Bosnian War to go on for so long without acting strongly to counter Serbian aggression. This then allowed for the turmoil in Croatia to spread into Bosnia. Finally, the United States, while considering solutions that later proved to be successful in bringing hostilities to an end, was complicit because it failed to firmly promote any new actions with its European allies that were leading the negotiations. U.S. reluctance to back up its words with physical actions condemned it. However, in doing so it preserved a good standing internationally in a time in which great change was taking place and any brash actions might have unsettled the work that was taking

place with Russia and other countries that appeared on the surface to be moving away from communism.

A Brief History of Twentieth Century Yugoslavia

Any study of Bosnia in the U.S. must begin with a short history of Yugoslavia in order to facilitate a greater understanding of how the various wars in the 1990s were not unprecedented to observers of Yugoslavia in the twentieth century. Yugoslavia as it was known up until the beginning of the 1990s was a relatively recent creation in terms of its history as a nation, even at the end of the twentieth century. “Yugoslavia was created in 1918 out of the shambles of World War I, and by the collapse of two empires: the Hapsburgs in the northwest and the Ottomans in the southeast. On the territory of modern Yugoslavia, only Serbia and Montenegro were independent of the two empires before 1918.”¹³ It was first known as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes following World War I, and was literally a creation by the victors at the end of the War.¹⁴

Though they shared a common Slavic ancestry, the groups making up the new kingdom actually possessed many differences along ethnic, religious, cultural, and historical lines. Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina had been a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire prior to and during WWI. For example, Serbia had been its own independent nation as had Montenegro. And Macedonia had been a part of the Ottoman Empire. These were diverse groups which suddenly were part of a single nation. It is no surprise then that they would later face difficulties in trying to coexist peacefully. Different people groups accustomed to their own belief systems and histories must share a strong bond after a major conflict in order for any unity to be upheld. Despite this, Yugoslavia managed to remain relatively united prior to World War

¹³ David Binder, “National Rivalries Cloud Dream of Yugoslav Unity,” *The New York Times*, 6 July 1991, 4.

¹⁴ The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929.

II. But this tenuous experiment in forced unity broke down quickly following the rapid defeat of its military and collapse of its government following the Kingdom of Yugoslavia's entry into the war.

During World War II, three major sides emerged of Yugoslav origins. The first were those of a Croatian puppet dictatorship set up by the Nazis under the care of Ante Pavelic and his Ustashe fighters. These were Croatian nationalists who clung to terror tactics in order to subjugate those who would not bow their knee to them. They represented a minority of the population, but the terror they imposed on the population of non-Croatian ethnic groups set a precedent for hatred and vengeance which would reemerge fifty years later as Yugoslavia again splintered. The second group was ethnically based and considered a loyalist group because they sought to reinstate the exiled monarchy after the war ended. They were known as Chetniks and were made up of Serbian patriots led by Draza Mihailovic. The third group, which eventually won the contest for supremacy, was that of the Communist Partisans, or the KPJ. They were led by Josip Broz Tito and fought simply for future control over Yugoslavia which they eventually won. These groups all committed atrocities on their fellow countrymen in seeking to come out victorious at the end of the war leading to a cycle of violence being created that would be revisited at the end of the century.

The civil war which devoured the Kingdom of Yugoslavia following the flight of its leaders left many victims, but few victors, as each of the three groups involved pursued its own violent agenda against any and all opposition. This created a situation in which the strongest would come out on top. Each side bore responsibility for not breaking this cycle, but the greater tragedy was that the violence was never dealt with, or resolved, after the war. Instead it was merely replaced for a while by the strong hand of Tito who kept antagonism between the

different ethnic groups temporarily at bay only for it to return with a vengeance later on between new generations of Yugoslavs that had experienced only peace.

To reiterate, “the conquerors (Axis) had both destroyed Yugoslavia as a state and set its components against each other...” using repressive tactics which “created an environment favorable to the propagation of revolutionary war.”¹⁵ In the vacuum of leadership, the Ustasha began a campaign of massacres against the Serbs and other non-Croat groups. The Serbs under Mihailovic and the multi-ethnic Partisans under Tito then rose in self-defense against the Ustasha and committed retaliatory massacres of their own against the Ustasha, each other, and the Axis troops stationed in the country. This was the legacy of World War II in Yugoslavia, and despite Tito’s ability to keep the peace during his reign as dictator he failed miserably in creating an environment in which the formerly competing groups could completely move on from the grievances of the past.

Once the civil war was over, Tito brought all the republics of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia under his rule. Yugoslavia then became a communist federation with its power solely invested in him. His rule was very much like Stalin’s in this way, and the initial position of Tito following World War II placed him firmly on the side of the Soviet Union, but Stalin offended him in 1948 by seeking to influence Tito’s Yugoslavia by trying to include it in the Cominform. The Cominform took the place of the former Comintern with its focus on ideological solidarity among the Soviet Union and other communist nations with the Soviets taking a leading role. Tito, however, was unwilling to “sacrifice sovereignty for the sake of ideological solidarity.”¹⁶ After all, “he (Tito) and his partisans, not the Red Army, had driven the Nazis out; unlike any of the other East European counterparts, Tito did not depend upon Stalin’s support to remain in

¹⁵ Pavlowitch, 146.

¹⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 124.

power.” Instead, “efforts to subject him to Cominform orthodoxy caused Tito to bristle, and by the end of June, 1948, he had openly broken with Moscow.”¹⁷ Soon after breaking with Stalin, relations were opened up between Tito and the West, especially the United States.

A Yugoslavia which remained communist but set itself apart from Stalin was of great value to the United States. It revealed that the “iron curtain” had potential weaknesses which could be exploited. Thus, the U.S. pursued an agenda which would bring Yugoslavia into its influence, predominantly through economic resistance. Tito never aligned himself with the U.S., but the U.S. continued to pursue more influence with Yugoslavia while contenting itself with Tito acting as a barrier to Soviet hegemony. However, the end of the Cold War changed all that, and the U.S. quickly lost interest in Yugoslavia with the fall of its once mighty adversary.

Within Yugoslavia, the peace that Tito was able to sustain after the unrest brought on by World War II was nothing short of amazing. The most striking peace was that which he achieved between Croats and Serbs. “Some Croats, at least, could take satisfaction in the fact that Marshal Tito was a Croat by birth and upbringing. Some Serbs could find satisfaction in the fact that fellow Serbs held a disproportionately large number of positions in the army, secret police, and federal bureaucracy.”¹⁸ The success he achieved was not universal, however. Many of the policies Tito used had negative impacts later on after his death. The greatest failure was that he did not allow others a voice in his regime. This made the rise of nationalism at the end of the century all the more reactive. The fact that two of the presidents of the emerging republics had been political prisoners under Tito speaks to this fact.¹⁹

¹⁷ Gaddis, 33.

¹⁸ David Binder, “National Rivalries Cloud Dream of Yugoslav Unity,” *The New York Times*, 6 July 1991, 4.

¹⁹ The president of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Izetbegovic, and the president of Croatia, Tudjman, both were political prisoners under Tito for speaking out. Tudjman spoke out nationalistically and Izetbegovic spoke out more radically for Islam.

The Decline of Yugoslavia

What occurred in Yugoslavia during World War II was a historical representation of what could happen again if events were allowed to continue along the course they took at the end of the century. The international community should have learned from the WWII example and listened to organizations like Helsinki Watch, but this was regrettably not to be. War did not spontaneously break out again in Yugoslavia, however. There were early indicators of what was to come with a gradual buildup of tension before an actual outburst of violence. This buildup gave the international community time to react, but time and again they either failed to act or capitulated to the stronger party's demands allowing actions to take place that further strained relations between the different groups at the table. All the while the outlook for those at risk in Yugoslavia's affected republics worsened.

With Tito's death in 1980 Yugoslavia lost the one person capable of holding the nation together politically. The tenuous ground on which the Communist federation had been built began to crumble, and then collapsed, with the end of the Cold War, and just ten years later a war broke out which in many ways resembled that which was brought to an end with Tito's victory following World War II. A country which seemed so promising just a few years earlier had slipped into civil war, but in many ways the civil war was inevitable as a result of the many deep-lying issues at its core. All that was needed to set off the war was a collapse in the federal government, the glue upon which solidarity within Yugoslavia was built, and that is just what happened. According to Zimmerman, Tito "unwittingly stimulated nationalism by destroying the central government's viability, empowering the republics, and creating the ludicrously feeble collective presidency."²⁰ Yugoslavia only existed, because Tito held it together by putting the

²⁰ Warren Zimmermann, *Origins of a Catastrophe: Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers--America's Last Ambassador Tells What Happened and Why*. (New York: Times Books, 1996), 39.

needs of Yugoslavia as a whole ahead of the desires of its individual parts. When Tito died, that all changed. A strong federal leader was replaced by leaders that either lacked the strength and Yugoslav nationalism of Tito, or were for their republics or provinces first and the nation of Yugoslavia second. Without a strong leader to subdue the republics, the nation of Yugoslavia began to unravel.

Republican issues became outcries of nationalism throughout the 1980s. Nationalism alone was not a bad thing. It was only when nationalism became interconnected with a desire for ethnic homogeneity by those in power that nationalism went from being a source of pride to a weapon for those who held on to grievances tracing back to World War II and beyond. With language and hostilities escalating, the leaders and their zealot followers loosed their hatred on their neighbors and encouraged others in their same ethnic group to follow suit.

At the beginning of 1990, there was speculation and fear that Yugoslavia was already on the verge of collapse, but the nature of that collapse was not yet known. In 1989, Romania experienced a successful, bloody revolution against the head of its Communist government who was promptly executed along with his wife. This led leaders to fear what might be in their own future as “Yugoslav Communists and their opponents” began to “agree that in this nation with a long history of civil strife, a fear of a violent anti-communist backlash” had potential to become a reality.²¹ But the bigger question was “whether the old, passionate rivalry among Yugoslavia’s ethnic groups [might] tear apart the Communist Party or even the nation.”²² This was exactly what happened in 1990. Tom Gallagher, an historian and writer of The Balkans after the Cold War, determined that holding “a genuinely competitive all-Yugoslav election” would have allowed for “forces committed to a democratic Yugoslavia based on ethnic parity” to compete

²¹ Marlise Simons, “Yugoslavia Catching East Europe’s Political Fever,” *The New York Times*, 21 January 1990, 1.

²² Simons, 1.

for power. Yet, when elections took place in each of the six republics, the end result of those elections gave “initiative to parties who wanted either to take their republic out of Yugoslavia, or recentralize it around their own ethnic group.”²³ This led to even greater divisions as ethnicity became a point of contention.

Eventually Yugoslavia as it had existed under Tito ceased to exist. Placing the blame on one specific republic or individual is impossible to do when looking at the collapse of Yugoslavia, however, and nothing is gained by pointing fingers. But the breakup did happen as had been speculated. One of the first steps toward collapse started with the Communist party’s splintering. This began with the Slovenian walkout of the party conference on Jan 23, 1990. After this, the “delegates left to return to their republics, where local Communist parties began emergency meetings to see whether they should pull out of the national organization or pull back together.”²⁴ These meetings led to the eventual split over how the different republics viewed the future of Yugoslavia.

The Slovenian walkout was based on their frustrations over “deeply unequal levels of development.”²⁵ The leaders of Slovenia felt that their republic was holding up the poorer republics of Yugoslavia, and they were not wrong in this belief. Their solution was to give more sovereignty to the individual republics thereby decreasing the power of the federal government but retaining unity. The Serbian leadership took the polar opposite position to this with the president of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic, calling for the strengthening of the federal government in order to keep Yugoslavia strong. Montenegro followed the Serbian lead in advocating this

²³ Tom Gallagher, *The Balkans after the Cold War*, (New York: Routledge, 2003), 13.

²⁴ Marlise Simons, “Yugoslavia on the Brink: After the Communists Fail to Forge Unity, The Republics Start to Go Their Own Ways,” *The New York Times*, 24 January 1990, A1.

²⁵ Marlise Simons, “Yugoslavia Catching East Europe’s Political Fever,” *The New York Times*, 21 January 1990, 1.

plan. With these two sides in opposition to one another and unwilling to compromise, the other republics of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia were forced to pick a side in the widening rift.

The question as to who should take the blame for starting the war is a complicated one to answer. As Yugoslavia began falling apart, each side pointed to the other in claiming that it was *them* who had started it and not *us*. Our actions were merely a response to those of the other. Serbia said that it was Croatia and Slovenia acting selfishly in their move to secede which set the collapse in motion. They also pointed at the international community for meddling in Yugoslavia's affairs in recognizing the secessionist republics. Croatia and Slovenia in turn blamed the Serbs for being uncompromising in their desire to invest more power in the federal government at the cost of any independent movement. What is lost in the finger-pointing is that they all had a hand in bringing Yugoslavia to ruin. The situation only spun out of control after each side refused to step down and began to doggedly pursue their own agendas in response to the actions of their opponents rather than seeking a peaceful alternative. Fear led to greater fear and violence led only to additional, increasingly extreme violence while emotions prevailed over reason.

The leaders of the republics only made matters worse through their actions and words. Slobodan Milosevic was one of the most important names to remember in understanding what became of Yugoslavia. Milosevic took control over the presidency of Serbia in 1988. Following this, he led the charge for giving more power to the federal government at the cost of weakening the republics, essentially counteracting what Tito had set into motion prior to his death.

Individuals that worked with Milosevic experienced different personalities. Warren Zimmerman, saw two sides of Milosevic. One "was hard-line, authoritarian, belligerent, bent on chaos, and wedded to the use of force to create a Greater Serbia." A second "was polite, affable,

cooperative, and always looking for reasonable solutions to Yugoslavia's problems."²⁶ These two sides of Milosevic were just covers for what David Halberstam saw as the true Milosevic—the supernationalist. When Slovenia and Croatia seceded, the supernationalist Milosevic emerged, and his focus changed to creating a Greater Serbia which would include all Serbs of former Yugoslavia.²⁷

The problem with this was that absorbing all the Serbian population was not a realistic goal. Most communities in Yugoslavia had become ethnically mixed over time, thus any attempt to create a homogenous Serbian state would force those of other ethnicities into the severe minority or cause mass migration over fear of living under a hostile Serbian government. Serbian authorities had done nothing to assuage such fears by their actions up to this point. Kosovo had fallen under a sort of “apartheid” during the 1980s with thousands of Albanians losing their jobs only to have Serbs “dispatched to fill key positions.”²⁸ This was the example of minority rights that the other nations had in front of them, and clearly this was not a good option. A member of the executive council of the ruling Muslim party in Bosnia stated it well when he said, “the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina will never accept the freedoms given to the Albanians of Kosovo.”²⁹

The position of the Serbian leadership also came to take an increasingly hard-line as the situation escalated. Milosevic and the other Serb leaders calling for complete Serbian autonomy made it clear that “the destiny of all Serbs was to live in one state, and since all land on which

²⁶ Zimmermann, 26.

²⁷ David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace: Bush, Clinton, and the Generals*, (New York: Touchstone Books, 2002), 27.

²⁸ Chuck Sudetic, “Ethnic Rivalries Push Yugoslavia to Edge,” *The New York Times*, 14 October 1990, 14.

²⁹ Celestine Bohlen, “Yugoslav Republic Fears It Could Become Pawn,” *The New York Times*, 13 August 1991, A6.

Serbs lived was by definition Serb land, it rightfully belonged to ‘Greater Serbia.’”³⁰ In January of 1991, this action was officially threatened by Milosevic when he said he would “demand territory from neighboring republics” if a confederation was created.³¹ What this demand failed to represent was the other ethnicities represented in the areas he was demanding. This was a statement which the international community should have jumped on in condemning Milosevic and threatening action. Instead, his threat was later allowed to be carried out upon the populace of the republics of Croatia and, most disastrously, Bosnia. This ideology was also allowed to permeate the communities of Serbs in the other republics who could now look to Serbia as their protector if they felt in any way threatened.

No one made this position more frighteningly clear than Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, when speaking about Sarajevo. He proclaimed that, “Sarajevo was Serb because Serbs had been there first, implying that Bosniacs (Muslim Bosnians) were some kind of alien force that had moved into Sarajevo from somewhere else; anything not purely Serb Orthodox was a form of occupation and had to be eliminated.”³² This was clearly a radical position held only by the more extreme Serbs, yet throughout the eventual war, this was the position which was voiced loudest. The international community should have picked up on this red flag. Despite the ubiquity of demonizing opponents through propaganda in war today, talk of the elimination of other ethnic groups should always trigger a strong response from international peacekeeping organizations like the UN. The statements made by those making policy were not hard to understand in what they implicated. In the statement above by Karadzic, there could be no mistaking his intent for Sarajevo. Yet the voices of these individuals were ignored by the

³⁰ Rabia Ali and Lawrence Lifschultz. “Why Bosnia?.” *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Sep 1994) , 368.

³¹ Chuck Sudetic, “Serb Chief Warns of Land Demands,” *The New York Times*, 11 January 1991, A5.

³² Michael Sells, “Crosses of Blood: Sacred Space, Religion, and Violence in Bosnia Herzegovina.” *Sociology of Religion* Vol. 64, No. 3 (Autumn 2003), 315.

leaders in the U.S. and Europe despite the frightening language being used. The threats of these leaders should have been taken seriously as their twisted nationalism would be a leading factor in the breakup of Yugoslavia.

Milosevic was not the sole Yugoslavian leader bent on a land grab if Yugoslavia collapsed. Franjo Tudjman, the president of Croatia also wanted to carve out his own piece of Yugoslavia if it fell apart. Much like Milosevic, he desired a Greater Croatia which would encompass all Croatians into one nation; however, Tudjman lacked the military means to deliver on this intent.³³ Throughout the fall of Yugoslavia and War in Bosnia, he would prove himself to be just as stubborn as Milosevic, and he might have been convicted of war crimes as well had he not died in 1999.

Bosnia had the misfortune of being positioned directly between these two leaders and their nations, and its “central location and mixed ethnic and religious profile ma[de] it a natural battleground between the forces on opposite sides of the confederation-federation conflict.”³⁴ Thus, as the peace talks floundered, any and all hope for a peaceful resolution was lost. With no desire to negotiate, Milosevic and Tudjman’s selfish ambitions led the way towards the destruction of not only Bosnia’s territory and people, but their own country’s international reputations and structural integrity.

The propaganda of the republics, especially Serbia, was essential to the build-up of tensions in Yugoslavia. Propaganda was used to instill fear in populations by pointing to past atrocities the other ethnic groups had committed in order to encourage their own population to act out first for protection of their own interests. Serbia mastered this tactic early on. One of Milosevic’s first targets was Politika, a large circulation Serbian newspaper. The other republics

³³ Halberstam, 333.

³⁴ Chuck Sudetic, “A Yugoslav Republic Holds a Contested Election,” *The New York Times*, 19 November 1990, A7.

followed soon after leading to a cycle of fear promoting violence as a twisted form of protection. Thus, those in power took the lessons of history and coupled them with information technology in order to create a frenzy out of which war would come.³⁵

The media is a strong catalyst in its ability to prompt action by those who fall under its auspices. This was especially true when looking at the role of state-sponsored propaganda in inciting action. The Serbian government proved highly effective in its use of history as a propaganda tool for demonizing the other ethnic groups. For Croatians, all they had to do was point back to World War II and the role of the Ustasha. Journalist Chuck Sudetic pointed out some of the historical wrongs that were being used.

Serbs have a tradition of armed resistance and a memory of atrocities committed by Croatia's wartime Fascist regime. That memory has spawned a deep fear of Croatian nationalism. Crude, sensationalist disinformation spread by Serbian demagogues and Belgrade's government-backed media has whipped up the Serbs' fears to a dangerous frenzy.³⁶

In order to demonize the Muslims of former Yugoslavia, the Serbian leadership had to look much further back in history. Then, "by conflating the demons of yesteryear with the stereotypes of today, neighbors were converted into the conquering Turks of the Middle Ages who had occupied 'Serb' lands and oppressed the Serb nation."³⁷ This allowed for Milosevic, Karadzic and other Serbian leaders like them to demonize the Muslim populations outside of their borders in areas like Bosnia and Kosovo. Because the ethnic Serbs in these areas represented minorities of the population, the potential threat to them by the Muslims was far more evident.

The great crimes Milosevic and his underlings were able to perpetuate on their victims bore testimony to their achievements in slander and fear mongering. According to Stephen

³⁵ Calin Hentea, *Balkan Propaganda Wars*, Translated by Cristina Bordanu, (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press Inc., 2006), 62, xiii.

³⁶ Chuck Sudetic, "Ethnic Rivalries Push Yugoslavia to Edge," *The New York Times*, 14 October 1990, 14.

³⁷ Ali, 376.

Engelberg of The New York Times, Milosevic's pursuit of a Greater Serbia employed a single strategy. "Each step begins with a propaganda campaign stressing injustices—usually grossly exaggerated—done to Serbs...Having stoked the fires with propaganda, Milosevic then pressures his target, either through organized demonstrations, military action or diplomacy."³⁸ As tension escalated to war, "military action" became the means by which Milosevic could achieve his goal of Serbian autonomy through the destruction of the non-Serb populations. Without minority or majority groups present to advocate for the land he desired for the Serbs, then he would have a much easier time keeping it for himself and the nation of Serbia. Thus, "the lists of crimes that Serb religious nationalists had claimed falsely were being carried out against Serbs became a blueprint for Serb nationalist programs of ethnic cleansing."³⁹

The Serbian leadership and individuals on the ground following the genocidal policies were not alone in their transgressions, however. The other republics counterattacked, often with the same policies in place. Nasir Oric, a Bosnian Muslim, took charge of the irregular Muslim forces in and around Srebrenica and attacked Serb-controlled villages massacring many in those villages.⁴⁰ Reprisals like these and the acts that inspired them promoted the idea that heterogeneity in ethnic demographics might not be possible despite a more recent history of peaceful coexistence in Bosnia and the whole of Yugoslavia prior to the war. So instead of focusing on recent history as the best solution, leaders succeeded in pursuing their purpose of homogeneous states through the use of mass genocide and expulsions. John F. Burns of The New York Times summarized this well.

Like the killings of civilians, the expulsions reflect in microcosm what has happened across wide areas of Croatia in the last year, and more recently in Bosnia and Herzegovina... In these places, groups of heavily armed men—most often Serbs, but also

³⁸ Stephen Engelberg, "Carving Out A Greater Serbia," 1 September 1991, SM18.

³⁹ Sells, 314.

⁴⁰ Halberstam, 202.

Croats in areas of Croatia where there are ethnic Serbian minorities, and Croats and Muslim Slavs in some Serbian minority areas of Bosnia—seek to unscramble the ethnic map. It is demographic engineering on a huge scale, generating new hatreds that seem likely to plague this part of the Balkans for generations.⁴¹

Hatred overshadowed the peace which had transpired in the decades since World War II. That hatred was again stoked by this war, but this new generation had the opportunity to learn from the mistakes made by their elders. In a quote taken from the *New Yorker*, Lawrence Lifschultz, a former South Asia correspondent, and his wife Rabia Ali, a Pakistani-born writer and research analyst at the World Bank's Research Department, suggested that what South Africa and the former Yugoslavia had in common was “simply their pain and their manipulation by politicians who exploit[ed] the idea that only ethnically homogeneous societies [could] be successful.”⁴² This belief was at the core of Milosevic and Tudjman’s leadership and strategies, the very foundations of which the European Community and especially the United States should have been quick to understand and reveal to be false. Unfortunately, the U.S. and their European allies failed to react to these early signs of disintegration, and the reactive nationalism of the Yugoslavian republics soon led it to collapse.

The Collapse of Yugoslavia

In a last ditch effort, the republics of Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina’s leaders offered one final compromise in an effort to stave off disaster. Reported on June 7, 1991 in *The New York Times*, their proposal recommended that the republics of Yugoslavia would gain their sovereignty as nations, but they would seek no international recognition or membership in the United Nations.⁴³ This was an attempt at appeasing the two opposing sides by giving autonomy

⁴¹ John F. Burns, “The Demographic of Exile: Victorious Serbs Repopulate Croatian Villages,” *The New York Times*, 10 May 1992, 3.

⁴² Ali, 386.

⁴³ Chuck Sudetic, “Yugoslavs Push Compromise Plan; Leaders of the Six Republics Agree to Continued Talks Over Power-Sharing,” *The New York Times*, 7 June 1991, A5.

to the different republics while keeping Yugoslavia intact as the one recognized entity of the international community. The leaders of Macedonia and Bosnia refused to give up on compromise because they knew each of their republics would be at a significant disadvantage should negotiations lead to war. Bosnians were especially worried about what would happen with both Croatia and Serbia claiming land within Bosnia's borders. The situation finally reached its breaking point on June 25, 1991 with the secession of Croatia and then Slovenia. According to Glenny, the secessions were the events which finally "woke the demons of civil war from their 46-year-old hibernation," and a war which had been silenced with Tito's consolidation of power was once again ignited between the republics.⁴⁴

Without a strong backing by the international community to deter an eventual military confrontation, and with every attempt at compromise through negotiations having failed, Yugoslavia finally succumbed to the opposing leaders' resolve to settle the dispute through strength of arms. The first place to experience this confrontation was Slovenia. Fighting began "after Serbia, the largest of the nation's republics and the dominant force in the Yugoslav military, made clear that it would use force to hold the federation together and prevent Slovenia from setting up border checkpoints and taking other steps toward autonomy."⁴⁵ Fortunately for the Slovenians, this attempt was quickly fended off and they retained their independence. The other secessionist republics of Croatia and Bosnia were not so fortunate, however, as Milosevic and the Yugoslav army now set their gaze on them. Questions quickly arose regarding whether the Yugoslav army was really still under the control of the Yugoslav leadership after this attempt at keeping Slovenia in through force was taken without the authority of the Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Markovic. The military, especially its officers, had continued to remain

⁴⁴ Glenny, 89.

⁴⁵ John Tagliabue, "New Warning by the Army Imperils Yugoslav Standoff," *The New York Times*, 2 July 1991, A8.

predominantly Serb since World War II. This trend continued into the 1990s for Yugoslavia, so it came as little surprise that the military was vulnerable to honoring the Serbian leadership and authority when Yugoslavia collapsed. There were many desertions following their actions as soldiers from the other republics defected to defend their new nations, families, and homes, but a majority of the military remained in service under Milosevic and the Serbian military complex.

Croatia was the next nation to be attacked by what remained of the Yugoslav army. At this point, casualties began to grow and the international community under the auspices of the United Nations finally began to notice and respond. After only six months of fighting, devastation was already apparent: thousands of soldiers and civilians were dead, Eastern Europe's most promising economy was fragmented and destroyed, half a million refugees had been created and hatred had been incited for future generations of conflict. Yet despite all of this wreckage, "it had not yet produced a decisive military result."⁴⁶ Without such a result, war spread into Bosnia where there was a large population of ethnic Serbs.

While negotiations were taking place, and even after war was raging in Croatia, the Bosnian President, Izetbegovic, continuously tried to ensure that peace would reign in Bosnia. Ultimately, he had four real options he could pursue. His first option would be to follow Croatia and Slovenia's compromise plan which would promote more sovereignty for the republics, but this would place him in direct opposition to Serbia. Secondly, Izetbegovic could side with the Serbians in promoting a stronger federal government for Yugoslavia, but after the secession of the other republics, this was not a desirable position. For the Muslims especially, this represented "the scenario they fear[ed] most: the creation of a greater Serbia," and they were right to fear this due to what "a whittled-down Yugoslavia" would logistically mean for them.

⁴⁶ Stephen Engelberg, "Yugoslav Ethnic Hatreds Raise Fears of a War Without an End," *The New York Times*, 23 December 1991, A1.

“Minus Slovenia, Croatia and Macedonia, Yugoslavia would have a population of roughly 14 million people of whom two-thirds would be Serbs.”⁴⁷ Within the second option, the fear of the Muslims being treated like the Muslim Albanians in Kosovo became a foreseeable reality, so this too was a bad choice.

Izetbegovic’s third option was to claim independence and secede from Yugoslavia with the intention of seeking international recognition. This was ultimately the choice that was made, but the costs for this were extremely high. The fourth and final choice was essentially to do nothing and see how things worked out. Unfortunately, this had the potential of placing Bosnia in a situation which might lead to its use as a pawn in “a peace patched together with parts of this republic, redistributed as booty in the feud between Serbia and Croatia.”⁴⁸ Clearly, none of these choices really had any potential for a beneficial outcome. Thus, Izetbegovic was left to make the best decision he could for his republic.

What followed, according to Izetbegovic, was a policy of “appeasement” to the Serbians by the international powers.⁴⁹ “Appeasement” is historically a loaded word, but it was precisely what the international community began to do in the face of Serbia’s aggression. Thus, with no desire to become a part of a ‘Greater Serbia,’ Bosnia seceded, declaring its independence on October 15, 1991. Ali and Lifschultz said that this action was naïve, for “the Bosnian parliament had declared independence without adequate preparations to either secure or defend it” and, “instead, succumbed to a certain political naiveté and placed its faith in European and U.S.

⁴⁷ Celestine Bohlen, “Yugoslav Republic Fears It Could Become Pawn,” *The New York Times*, 13 August 1991, A6.

⁴⁸ Celestine Bohlen, “Yugoslav Republic Fears It Could Become Pawn,” *The New York Times*, 13 August 1991, A6.

⁴⁹ Ali, 373.

commitments.”⁵⁰ Regardless, it is still the position of this paper that this was the best decision for Bosnia, given the myriad of poorer choices.

Under the circumstances, there was little else that Bosnia could do but place its hope in the international community. Izetbegovic knew that his republic did not have the means to stand up against the Yugoslav army and militant Bosnian Serbs in the eastern portions of Bosnia. For this reason, he quickly followed up his declaration with an appeal to the UN Security Council “to deploy peacekeeping forces in this Yugoslav republic as soon as possible to reduce the risk of a serious outbreak of ethnic violence.”⁵¹ What was happening in Croatia would soon spill over into Bosnia, and he was giving the international community advance warning that they could do something to stop the violence before it came. Three months later, the Bosnian delegation was appealing again. This time, however, the delegation was appealing “as fighting raged for a third day in the town of Bosanski Brod.”⁵² The opportunity for a cease fire had been missed, and things only got worse from here.

As war spread through Bosnia, the fury of the fighting and atrocities, both experienced and committed by the different groups, quickly escalated. In all fairness, individuals from every side contributed to the cycle of violence. The Serbs would commit the largest number of atrocities over the duration of the war, but the Croats would commit many of their own as well in their attempts to claim the second spot of power and logistical control. Both were equally guilty of human rights violations as were many Bosnian Muslims. However, the conflict between the Serbs and Croats was quickly recognized as the trigger of what would become an even larger war. The U.S. Helsinki Commission, otherwise known as the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, already recognized the possibility of an escalation in violence in

⁵⁰ Ibid, 374.

⁵¹ “Bosnia Appeals to U.N.,” *The New York Times*, 24 December 1991, A3.

⁵² Chuck Sudetic, “Bosnia Asking U.N. For Peace Forces,” *The New York Times*, 28 March 1992, 4.

February 1992. U.S. Representative Jim Moody⁵³ of Wisconsin presented what he had observed in meetings with the leaders of Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia to the Commission and made it clear that the war already being fought in Croatia was “a continuation of an old conflict between Serbs and Croats,” and that it was “particularly important to prevent any fighting from spreading to Bosnia-Herzegovina, where a spark could ignite a bloody war of endless reprisals, involving not only Serbs and Croats, but also [Muslims].”⁵⁴ Moody’s arguments demonstrated an understanding and communication of what was to come. Thus, the U.S. and the international community again missed an opportunity to act forcefully at a point in which casualties still remained somewhat low, and they would continue to miss opportunities for the next few years.

The Role of the United Nations

The UN committed many errors in Bosnia, but it would be wrong to concentrate only on the errors. The organization must be credited with trying to help and mediate matters in the Balkans. The intentions of the UN were always good; the problems arose from its members. China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, France and the United States are all permanent members with veto power, and Yugoslavia was historically connected to each of these powerful nations. Complicating things further, France, Russia and the UK were all allies of Serbia in each of the World Wars.⁵⁵ This caused the leaders of these nations to act reluctantly against Serbia despite its role as the aggressor. Eventually leadership would change and these nations would turn against Serbia, but by that point hundreds of thousands had already died in former Yugoslavia. Thus, their actions must be observed and critiqued in order to more clearly understand what went wrong.

⁵³ Jim Moody spent two years in the Peace Corps and CARE in Yugoslavia.

⁵⁴ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Website, “5 February 1992 Hearing: The Yugoslav Republics: Prospects for Peace and Human Rights”, <http://www.csce.gov/> (Accessed February 16, 2011).

⁵⁵ Halberstam, 88.

The United Nations' role in Bosnia began well, but it did little to impede the carnage that transpired between April 1992 and December 1995. Though the Bosnian War began as a civil war, it quickly escalated into a significant international concern with the introduction of UN Security Council resolutions and personnel. The introduction of these economic and human elements intertwined the UN's future with that of Bosnia, creating a more direct relationship between the actions of the UN and what was actually taking place in the country.

The UNs' main objectives in Bosnia were to contain the conflict and stop the atrocities from continuing by brokering a peace settlement between the three groups. With the passing of UN security resolution 713 on the 25 September 1991, the first step by the UN towards stopping the violence was imposed with the creation of an arms embargo on the whole of the former Yugoslavia.⁵⁶ Coupled with this policy was the requirement to bring the heads of the fighting factions to the negotiation table. Movement in this direction began by inserting UN military liaisons into the country (Resolutions 727 and 740, 8 January and 7 February 1992) and eventually peacekeepers and dispersers of humanitarian aid in the form of UNPROFOR, or UN Protection Force (Resolution 743, 21 February 1992). The next step was to create a no-fly zone over Bosnia (Resolution 781, 9 October 1992) followed by the creation of UN "safe zones" for those fleeing (Resolutions 819 and 824, 16 April and 6 May 1993)⁵⁷. This was followed by the establishment of an International Tribunal for former Yugoslavia to prosecute those violating humanitarian law (Resolution 827, 25 May 1993), yet each step would demonstrate itself to be insufficient, as the fighting continued for 2 more years after even these later resolutions. Thus,

⁵⁶ United Nations Website, Security Council Resolution regarding Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia 1991, <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1991/scres91.htm>, Accessed May 31, 2011.

⁵⁷ First safe area declared was Srebrenica with Resolution 819 followed by the safe areas of Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac, and Sarajevo with Resolution 824.

after all these things had failed, the UN created a rapid reaction force (Resolution 998, 16 June 1995) and started strategic bombing as punishment for breaking the terms of agreements.⁵⁸

It is important to note how early the UN Security Council actually understood what was happening in Bosnia. Resolution 787 first referenced “ethnic cleansing” taking place on 16 November 1992. Resolution 798 condemned the Serbs for the “systematic detention and rape of women” in Bosnia on 18 December 1992. Also notable was UN soldiers were never given the right to fire if fired upon or the ability to use force to protect civilians which added to a sense of hopelessness for those on the ground in the country. Over the years of the war, there were obviously many other actions and resolutions passed. However, these were some of the most significant which bear mentioning because of their specific implications amidst the conflict. All of these resolutions were necessary and good, but the timing in which they were implemented and the lack of action to back up their words was unacceptable.

The negotiators made a mess of things from the start. As arbitrators of the conflict, the Western diplomats were responsible for bringing about a swift and satisfactory end to the conflict. Instead negotiations turned into a “tragic game of procrastination.”⁵⁹ Decision-making in conflicts such as the civil war in Yugoslavia require well thought out decisions to be made quickly. Every day in which no action was taken meant more civilians and soldiers would die. This only got worse as the war spread to Bosnia. “While Bosnia’s towns and villages were set ablaze, governments in Paris, London, New York, and Washington, unencumbered by any great sense of urgency, engaged in protracted, contentious and, in the end, sterile debate over the

⁵⁸ United Nations Website, Security Council Resolutions regarding Bosnia 1992-1995, http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions.html, Accessed May 31, 2011.

⁵⁹ Geza Jeszenszky, “The Right Choice on Yugoslavia; To Insure Peace, the West Must Move Faster,” *The New York Times*, 16 January 1992, A23.

options available to them to stop the war.”⁶⁰ The stakes were high, and there should have been no doubt that something must be done when human rights violations became common knowledge. The UN was formed in part to try and ensure that future generations would not suffer the same horrors of the earlier half of the twentieth century. But poor decisions, inaction, and timidity on the part of the UN marred the peace process throughout the early nineties.

One of the first major mistakes to be made was recognizing the republics and accepting them into the UN as newly independent states but then doing nothing to protect them. As they recognized the republics, they should also have “de-recognized” Yugoslavia.⁶¹ It no longer made sense to sustain actions against all of former Yugoslavia when half of its republics were recognized as independent and others were waiting for recognition.

The first example of this complexity was the arms embargo. With the passing of Resolution 713 of the United Nations Security Council, an arms embargo against all of Yugoslavia was declared.⁶² The embargo made sense while the nation continued to exist and be recognized as Yugoslavia, but as soon as the international community, especially those nations of the European Community and United States, began recognizing the individual republics as independent, it no longer made sense to clump them all together.

From an outsider’s perspective, an arms embargo would seem like a wise approach to stemming the violence taking place within a conflict. It would at least make it difficult for the sides involved to commit themselves to protracted campaigns of violence if they could not find an outside means to keep themselves armed. However, the arms embargo had an adverse effect in Bosnia for the Bosnian Muslims, who suddenly lost their ability to arm and defend

⁶⁰ Ali, 379.

⁶¹ “De-Recognize Yugoslavia,” *The New York Times*, 18 December 1991, A28.

⁶² NATO Website, <http://www.nato.int/IFOR/un/u910925a.htm> (Accessed January 12, 2011).

themselves. President Clinton understood this early on in his administration and the complexity of the situation which existed:

There plainly is a civil war in Bosnia that is, among other things, a fight primarily between the Serbs and the Muslims but also involving the Croatians. It is complicated by the fact that Serbia, a separate country, has intervened in it, and complicated by the fact that the United Nations before Bosnia, the nation of Bosnia was even recognized, imposed an arms embargo in the area. But the practical impact of the arms embargo that the United Nations imposed was to give the entire weaponry of the Yugoslav Army to the Serbian Bosnians and deprive any kind of equal weaponry to the people fighting against them. So the global community had, not on purpose, but inadvertently, has had a huge impact on the outcome of that war in ways that have been very bad.⁶³

Another grave error was the length of time it took for the United Nations to send in a peacekeeping force, even after all the powers in conflict with each other had requested such a force. The Yugoslav national government and the leaders of Slovenia and Croatia all asked for the United Nations to send a major peacekeeping operation in late 1991. Bosnia asked for aid shortly after this as well. However, in reply to these requests, UN officials determined that only a “token force” would be proposed as a “signal to the combatants that they must prove they really want peace.”⁶⁴ Their response was both counterintuitive and nonsensical as its unlikely that these government bodies would have asked for a peacekeeping mission if they did not indeed desire peace. This was a golden opportunity for the United Nations to be able to place troops in the countries affected and work for a real peace. The Security Council was in agreement with the Secretary General on this in initially proposing that small numbers of “military liaison officers” be sent in order to monitor the situation.⁶⁵ This had a detrimental effect on the support of their allies.

⁶³ National Archives and Records Administration, “Remarks to High School Students and a Question-and-Answer Session in Bensonville, Illinois”, (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 17 May 1993), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 14, 2011), 818.

⁶⁴ Paul Lewis, “U.N. Chief to Seek Team of Monitors to Aid Yugoslavia: Truce Vital to Next Step,” *The New York Times*, 6 January 1992, A1.

⁶⁵ NATO Website, <http://www.nato.int/IFOR/un/u920108a.htm> (accessed January 12, 2011).

The UN had hoped that enough peacekeepers would be deployed to deter Serb attacks, but President Clinton had made it clear that the United States would not send troops, and the European countries that had already deployed soldiers to Bosnia were reluctant to contribute many more peacekeepers to a failing UN effort.”⁶⁶

The inability of the Bosnian civilians to arm themselves and the initial lack of humanitarian troops to, at the very least, dampen Serbian aggression was only made worse by the fact that the Serbs were waging indiscriminate warfare on the civilian population of Bosnia, both Croatian Bosnians and Muslim Bosnians (even Bosnian Serbs that refused to leave their homes, friends, or family in areas like Sarajevo). The Serbian artillery units above Sarajevo were able to shell the city with impunity because the city’s defenders lacked the weapons, and therefore the ability, to strike back.⁶⁷ Once the Serbian military accomplished taking part of the city of Sarajevo they were able to use snipers as well. These strategies were as successful in terrorizing the populace of Sarajevo as they were elsewhere.

The United Nations made another critical error involving troops when it refused to allow for its troops to act either in self-defense or in defense of the civilian population when terms of the negotiations were broken or when noncombatant’s lives were endangered. This was further exacerbated by the fact that the negotiating parties were to adhere to an honor system with no threat of force or negative consequences in place should they break the terms of that system. Resolution 727 of the United Nations Security Council made this abundantly clear when it “urge[d] all parties to honour the commitments made at Geneva and Sarajevo with a view to effecting a complete cessation of hostilities” and “request[ed] all parties to take all necessary measures to ensure the safety of the personnel sent by the United Nations and of the members of

⁶⁶ Power, 391.

⁶⁷ Chuck Sudetic, “Serbs Intensify Sarajevo Attacks; ‘Pure Terrorism,’ Bosnia Charges,” *The New York Times*, 22 April 1992, A10.

the European Community Monitoring Mission.”⁶⁸ This resolution and the majority of resolutions following this one up until after the Srebrenica massacre were devoid of strong language or the presence of negative repercussions should terms be broken—a particularly striking contrast to the virulent language being used in propaganda by the Serbian leadership.

While negotiations were being held, propaganda in Serbia and elsewhere was making use of strong language and lies in order to incite action against those different from themselves. In the face of such bold rhetoric, the UN’s use of language was noticeably weak. There were no commands; there were only ‘urges’ and ‘requests’ which proved easy to ignore. A lack of strong language or any threat of immediate repercussions only strengthened the resolve of Serbian leaders like General Mladic who then took it upon themselves to act with even greater aggression against the civilian population of Bosnia. Throughout this entire process, the UN continued to dream of brokering a peace agreement, and the Bosnian Muslims and their fellow citizens that held to the belief that a multicultural, pluralistic society could and should persist continued to die.

Two years later, in August of 1993, this sentiment remained the same as Clinton stated, “the message is, first of all, that the allies are determined to protect the United Nations forces there, determined to secure the humanitarian relief program. And the other message is that we would very much—all of us--like to see a successful agreement and a fair peace agreement that can then be enforced.”⁶⁹ Enforcement would only come once terms of peace were made acceptable to all parties. After two years of negotiations and war, there were still no accommodations for UN troops on the ground to act with force when Serbian forces disrupted

⁶⁸ United Nations Website, Security Council Resolutions 1992 – Resolution 727, <http://www.un.org/documents/sc/res/1992/scres92.htm> (accessed March 4, 2011).

⁶⁹ National Archives and Records Administration, “Remarks on Signing the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 and an Exchange With Reporters”, (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 9 August 1993), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 14, 2011), 1541.

their ability to disperse aid. The distribution of humanitarian aid in crisis situations today is one of the great humanitarian victories of the current era, but the terms by which the troops were able to distribute it while simultaneously allowing acts of genocide to continue unchecked did not line up with the purposes of the UN and one reason for which it was created.

David Rieff questioned the reasoning of this dichotomy. He felt that “any future moral authority in the United Nations could hope to exercise depended on its doing something to help in Bosnia.” After all, it seemed “incongruous that UN soldiers and UNHCR convoy drivers risked and sometimes lost their lives to bring in food to isolated areas, but steadfastly refused to silence the guns that were causing the emergency.”⁷⁰ The politics of creating a peace agreement appeared to be the very thing which allowed peace to remain unattainable. The environment became increasingly difficult for the UN soldiers. Even if had been given the right to fight when necessary they “were almost always outnumbered and underarmed, and they never knew whether they should return fire. If they did, they might move from being impartial peacekeepers to armed participants, and not only would the mighty Serbs turn on them, but their superiors at UN headquarters in New York would be furious.”⁷¹ With a UN Security Council directive in place, nobody on the ground could fire a shot, and there would be negative repercussions for anyone who did. The Serbian leaders taking part in negotiations realized this and began using it to their advantage knowing that the UN peacekeepers were not there to stop them as long as such directives continued. The UN would continue to pursue diplomatic means towards peace with little measurable change in policy despite this continued aggression by the forces in Bosnia. This led countries like the United States to saying they could have no part in placing their own troops on the ground there in assisting with the humanitarian aid process.

⁷⁰ Rieff, 139-140.

⁷¹ Halberstam, 125.

What remained more striking than anything else in this conflict, however, was the duration of the peace process. The Bosnian War lasted four years with little measurable progress in the peace negotiations or limiting of violence on the ground for the first couple years. This led to individuals like Warren Zimmerman, and others to question how functional the United Nations could actually be in determining and endorsing policy in regional conflicts. Time was imperative in bringing the violence to an end as long as individuals were losing their lives, but the process was neither timely nor succinct. Speaking on the nature of diplomacy in this conflict, Zimmerman reasoned that,

Those who practice diplomacy need constantly to be reminded of the human damage their efforts, or lack of them, can cause. For three years of the Bosnian war, the Western countries had attempted to rebuff the Serbian aggressors, bloated by their use of force, without making them fear that force would in turn be used against them. Western diplomacy was reduced to a kind of cynical theater, a pretense of useful activity, a way of disguising a lack of will. Diplomacy without force became an unloaded weapon, impotent and ridiculous.⁷²

Though he was not alone in this sentiment, it was disturbing to hear a former ambassador speak of the delineations in such a way.

One of the gravest errors made by the intervening powers was eventually rewarding Croatia and Serbia with land they had claimed outside their own republic's borders. This occurred in early 1993 after the new Clinton Administration supported former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and former British Foreign Secretary David Owen's "settlement based on ten ethnic provinces and accepting for the first time that territory seized by Serbian forces in their campaign of 'ethnic cleansing' would be recognized as a fait accompli."⁷³ From any angle, this was an unfortunate decision, and it soon became clear to those who put the plan together that this was the case. "The cheery optimism of Vance and Owen quickly proved to be a chimera. As

⁷² Zimmermann, 230-231.

⁷³ Ali, 387.

predicted, their plan provided a perverse rationale for one of the most violent phases of land grabbing and 'ethnic cleansing' yet seen in the Balkan war 'by tempting the owners of the national provinces to full possession of their mini-states.'"⁷⁴ Rewarding aggression logically led to more aggression. Such decisions encouraged the Serbian leadership by revealing that when it pushed, there would be no push back from the international community. Thus, there was no incentive for Milosevic to back off. This also encouraged Tudjman to pursue his own cut of Bosnia for Croatia. In all these decisions, Bosnia was the loser. In defense of Vance and Owen, they were making their decision based on the actions, or more accurately, inactions, of the nations they were representing. "Yes, it was an imperfect plan, but it was the only one possible without military intervention."⁷⁵ Thus, the negotiators' jobs were made difficult not only by the parties at war but by those they were representing in trying to bring about a peace agreement.

President Clinton was willing to acknowledge that the process was not without fault. When asked by a reporter in May 1994 whether the chain of command in and between the UN and NATO was too cumbersome or bureaucratic, President Clinton admitted that it was a problem the UN was working on. However, Clinton also asserted a valid argument for looking at the proceedings with grace in light of the international organizations "trying to do something that has not before been done: put NATO in the service of preserving the peace in Europe outside the NATO membership area for the first time ever and to work with the United Nations when the United Nations forces are on the ground, but not combatants themselves."⁷⁶ The reality that the UN was on the ground while NATO controlled the skies made things difficult. Initially this made sense while peace was trying to be achieved without the shedding of blood. Yet the

⁷⁴ Ibid, 387.

⁷⁵ Halberstam, 199.

⁷⁶ National Archives and Records Administration, "Remarks Honoring the 1994 Victim Service Award Recipients and an Exchange With Reporters", (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 2 May 1994), (Accessed February 10, 2011) 907.

time it took for the UN to move from negotiating peace to penalizing acts of aggression was a long road, leaving the Bosnians to bear the heartbreak in the interim. However exhausting the process was for those taking part in negotiations, it is important to remember that these negotiations were exponentially more difficult on the victims in Bosnia as events continued without significant change.

Few understood this better than a little girl who lived through much of the siege of Sarajevo. Credited as the Anne Frank of the Bosnian War, Zlata Filipovic expressed her frustration with the way politics were being handled. In November 1992, she recorded in her diary that there was “nothing new on the political front” as the negotiations and resolutions were passed yet appeared to do little to impact the lives of those within Sarajevo. Instead they were “dying, freezing, starving, crying, parting with [their] friends, leaving [their] loved ones” while the ‘kids’ played politics.⁷⁷ Tragically, these negotiations continued for two more years at the cost of thousands more lives lost.

The true nature of the UN was revealed in its role in former Yugoslavia. It revealed itself to be made up of peacekeepers, not peacemakers, even when basic human rights were being violated and established reports of genocide and mass rape were being delivered to them and reported in the news. The UN would later show another major flaw of their policy when they held the lives of their own troops above the lives of those individuals they were being sent in to protect as virtually every UN Security Council resolution called upon all the parties to “ensure the safety of United Nations and other personnel engaged in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.”⁷⁸ A significant test of this resolve came at Srebrenica in 1995.

⁷⁷ Zlata Filipovic, *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 102-103.

⁷⁸ UN Security Council documents; virtually every resolution mentions this from the introduction of military liaisons on (Resolution 727, 8 January 1992).

Srebrenica is important to mention because it represents the location of one of the greatest massacres of Bosnian Muslims in the war. It is also important because “the fall of Srebrenica changed everything. It offended the Western nations and in some way made the tragedy personal.”⁷⁹ The greatest hardship of this massacre was that it occurred in an area that had been declared a UN safe zone. This led to “debate over complicity in genocide on the part of UN personnel.”⁸⁰

What is undeniable is that when Srebrenica was bombarded on 9 and 10 July, the Dutch UN contingent defending the ‘safe area’ put up no resistance. Around thirty of their number were held hostage at the time, but they also lacked backup support, equipment or the will to impede the Serbs in any way.⁸¹

It would be easy to point the finger of liability at the Dutch soldiers for allowing the genocide and ethnic cleansing which ensued at Srebrenica to occur, but they were not solely responsible. They were peacekeeping soldiers of the United Nations under orders to keep the peace without taking sides. This massacre revealed the UN to be incapable of bringing about peace as long as its structure remained the same.

Action was quickly taken by the UN following the events at Srebrenica, but by that time over 8,000 Muslim men and boys had been murdered in Srebrenica alone. Though similar atrocities were and had been taking place elsewhere for many years, this was unique in that it was within a UN declared “safe area.” Srebrenica was a major reality check for the international community on the limitations of remaining neutral. It was difficult to accept that it would take a horrific example like Srebrenica to get the UN to finally flex its muscles and say enough was enough and that the many other deaths prior to this had not been reason enough to act. As a

⁷⁹ Halberstam, 326-327.

⁸⁰ Arne Johan Vetlesen, “Genocide: A Case for the Responsibility of the Bystander.” *Journal of Peace Research* Vol. 37 (July 2000), 519.

⁸¹ Tom Gallagher, *The Balkans after the Cold War: From Tyranny to Tragedy*. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 158.

body created to keep the peace and preserve justice following World War II, the UN failed in Bosnia and the rest of former Yugoslavia to uphold the basic laws on which it was built. The UN has learned valuable lessons from Bosnia, but the Bosnian people paid a tragically high cost for that which was learned much too late.⁸²

That Srebrenica even happened was a consequence of the greatest mistake the UN made; the mistake of allowing too much time to pass before major actions were taken to stop the Serbian aggressors. The worst fears of those whom had speculated what could happen if war came to Bosnia were realized when it finally did in April 1992, and time became the greatest ally of leaders like Karadzic and Mladic. The Bosnian Serb army, and what remained of a predominantly Serbian Yugoslav army, was initially quick to sweep in and overwhelm those that stood in their way. With superior armaments and military leadership experience they were able to overrun more than half of the country. And afterward, they began undermining all the work that had taken place in Bosnia's prior forty years as a part of Yugoslavia in moving towards becoming a more pluralistic society. The long negotiation process that followed allowed for sniper and mortar fire to slowly destroy both the lives and beliefs of a population that still desired a society in which the different ethnic groups could coexist and thrive together. This then made it possible for the stronger and more corrupt to move in and dictate the future of Bosnia once the war finally ended.

United Nations and the United States

At the time, one of the major questions regarding the crisis in the Balkans was, "[Could] the U.S. and Europe allow a military crackdown in Yugoslavia? The event would certainly

⁸² Role of UN and international community with regard to genocide according to website: The international community has a responsibility to use appropriate diplomatic, humanitarian and other means to protect populations from these crimes. If a State is manifestly failing to protect its populations, the international community must be prepared to take collective action to protect populations, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

undermine the whole concept of European security and stability.”⁸³ This was true. Had no containment policies been attempted, the war could have spread outside the borders of Yugoslavia, upsetting European stability. The last thing the U.S. and Europe wanted was an unstable dictatorship in Europe after seeing the Soviet Union finally fall. Thus, it follows that a peaceful solution to the Yugoslav crisis was desirable.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and with it an end to the Cold War, it comes as no surprise that much of Eastern Europe was thrown into chaos. Though Yugoslavia had existed apart from the Soviet Union, the vacuum left by the absence of a suitable strong handed dictator to take Tito’s place after his death allowed the fires of nationalism to make their way into its republics. Some, like Milosevic in Serbia and to a lesser extent Tudjman in Croatia, used nationalism as a means to unite their entire ethnic group together in one border much like Germany had done earlier in the century. Milosevic appeared more like the communist dictators of old in his pursuit of achieving a Greater Serbia by using the means given him as leader of the state. Others, like Izetbegovic in Bosnia, had a more multiethnic vision of nationalism and their pursuit of a future apart from communism united them and other nations and republics pursuing democracy to the national interests of the U.S. While the Cold War was over, the U.S. goal of spreading democracy was not.

Thus, the United States approach to dealing with the Bosnian War possessed the same two major objectives as the United Nation’s and NATO’s. Repeatedly, Clinton stated the two clearest objectives to be that “we want the conflict to be contained, and we want the slaughter and the ethnic cleansing to stop.”⁸⁴ He also maintained that this would require working with the

⁸³ Boro Dropulic, “Is There A Yugoslavia?,” *The New York Times*, 22 March 1991, A33.

⁸⁴ National Archives and Records Administration, “Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Cabinet Meeting”, (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 12 April 1993), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 10, 2011), 921.

allies within the UN and NATO regardless of his agreement or disagreement with their policies. In doing so, Clinton tied the U.S. to the UN and Europe in whatever decisions would play out in Bosnia starting early in 1993. Things would not change until 1995.

There were a number of key changes which took place in 1995 in leadership, firepower, and policy—turning the tide for the U.S. involving itself in Bosnia. Francois Mitterrand was replaced by Jacques Chirac as the president of France on May 17 of that year.⁸⁵ He then “talked with John Major about the creation of a Rapid Reaction Force, an elite French-British unit, far better armed with much heavier weapons, which, with American air support and helicopters, could move quickly and strike the Serbs with genuine force if they violated any more agreements.”⁸⁶ When Major agreed, this put the two nations which had stood most firmly in the way of stronger action in Yugoslavia on the side of politicians in the U.S. that wanted to be more forceful in responding to Serb aggression.

Leadership also changed hands over command of airpower from the UN, which had been too Serbocentric under Secretary General Boutros-Ghali and was therefore “compromised,” to NATO which saw Bosnia as a part of its sphere of influence where it could not afford to fail.⁸⁷ Taking the UN out of the hierarchy of airpower simplified the command structure making it easier and quicker to call in air support.

In addition, Croatian forces which had been trained by former U.S. army officers “could for the first time match the Serbs in firepower.”⁸⁸ The Serbs did well early in the war largely because of their superiority in firepower. As long as they held that edge, neither the Croatians nor the Bosnian Muslims could stand up to them in battle.

⁸⁵ Halberstam, 293.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 303.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 327-328.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 293.

In the U.S., Bob Dole, the Senate majority leader at the time, was “advocating a resolution that called for a unilateral lifting of the arms embargo. He appeared to have the votes in both the House and the Senate to pass the resolution, and in case the president vetoed it, the votes to override the veto.”⁸⁹ This meant that Clinton would have the backing of Congress if he decided to pursue a more active role in Bosnia. The changes in Europe also made it possible to realistically consider a multilateral lifting of the arms embargo and united military front.

Most importantly, the U.S. also finally possessed the leadership and will to act decisively. Clinton was a strong domestic policy president, but weak in foreign policy—his proficiency in which was limited to that of his advisers. By 1995, there were three key individuals whom had joined his team of advisers that made the difference in Bosnia. The first individual was General John Shalikashvili. He became the head of the joint chiefs in fall of 1993 replacing Colin Powell. Over the next few years Shalikashvili proved himself to be a highly capable leader and made his greatest mark when he proposed going directly to a massive air campaign with the objective of taking out the Serbs’ air defense systems, “thereby sending them the first of what might be a series of messages.”⁹⁰ This would not be a small retaliatory gesture to Serb aggression. It would be a firm statement of what would come in the future if they continued to act as they had throughout the war to this point. Shalikashvili was not intimidated.

The second individual was William “Bill” Perry who became Clinton’s Secretary of Defense in February of 1994. Perry was a highly intelligent individual with a Ph.D. in mathematics who had served as undersecretary for research and engineering under Carter, and he proposed a number of changes for both the U.S. and UN military tactics in Bosnia.⁹¹ The first proposition he made was similar to Shalikashvili’s in calling for “massive high-technology

⁸⁹ Halberstam, 302-303.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 327.

⁹¹ Ibid, 328.

bombing” or “carpet bombing.” This would not be like the inefficient carpet bombing of World War II. Instead, it would be a strong assault on Serb positions using precision bombing technology to overwhelm them with their ability to bomb accurately and with great magnitude. However, the aerial bombing would only be one part of the assault.

Another tactical change was the consolidation of the many scattered, smaller units of UN troops into “units of a thousand men or more” with sufficient firepower to hold off the Serbs until air cover arrived. This would take away the ability of the Serb forces to capture UN troops and hold them as hostages in order to make demands. “Meanwhile, a team of American, British, and French generals would meet with the Bosnian Serb leaders to warn them that if they tried anything from now on, we would pound them as they had never been pounded before.”⁹² These tactics would show that the years of bowing to Serb aggression were over. The international community was finally empowered to control the situation.

The final figure was the biggest advocate of Bosnia and the plight of the people there and proved to be the greatest hero of this tragedy on the U.S. side of things. Richard Holbrooke was considered by some to be the “most talented candidate” for secretary of state when Clinton was looking to first fill the position, but he had the most enemies of any of the candidates.⁹³ Holbrooke was not afraid to step on toes, but Clinton did not want a secretary of state that would push him too hard in foreign policy. Thus, he lost out on this position and others having to settle for ambassador to Germany. Holbrooke did not disappear, however, and following Srebrenica he was called on to take a leading role in Bosnia. Despite his faults which made him could make him a political liability at times, Holbrooke “was also decisive and audacious, willing to do some things wrong in order to do other things right, willing above all to take risks for policies he

⁹² Halberstam, 330.

⁹³ Ibid, 176.

believed in.”⁹⁴ He believed that things could be different in Bosnia, and he made them so. Each of these individuals and the changes which took place in the personnel and postures of the leaders in Europe ensured that the intervention in Bosnia would be different in 1995.

Media Framing

Throughout the Bosnian War, the media played an integral part in reporting what was taking place in Bosnia to those that were not present there. Out of these reports, opinions were formed about how the U.S. should be involved. However, these reports were not perfect in their coverage of the conflict.

Public opinion played a large role in the development of the United States’ foreign policy with Bosnia throughout the conflict. Newspaper articles and televised broadcasts led average U.S. citizens to develop a conscience for the injustices occurring in a country which they otherwise might never have heard of or cared about. Ask around today and most people still have no idea where Bosnia is. Yet in a democratic nation like the United States, public polls play a significant role in the policy of the administration in office. At the time of the Bosnian War, “the two most important developments in American politics were the use of polling and television advertising, both of them joined together in zeroing in on and then manipulating what the voting public thought at a given moment.”⁹⁵ With the advent of CNN, news was accessible twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week, and Bosnia was a big story. Perhaps a more poignant question was whether what was being seen was an accurate representation of what was happening. Historian James J. Sadkovich did not believe so.

In reality, victims who died on a weekend, or far from TV minicams, or in a forest deep inside Bosnia made little or no sound, because few journalists worked weekends—or from 7:00 P.M. in the evening to 10:00 A.M. the next morning, or in Bosnia’s forests; TV journalists have a window from 10:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. when they gather news for the

⁹⁴ Ibid, 342.

⁹⁵ Halberstam, 208.

prime-time slot. Journalists stayed in major cities because access to occupied areas was limited. By limiting access, the Serbians diverted more attention to Croatian and Bosnian territories. As a result, human rights violations and war crimes by Croatians and Bosnians were exaggerated by UN officials and a media anxious for copy, whereas genocide in Serbian areas was not even reported—unless the potential or actual victim was an American.⁹⁶

Just as national interest had played a role in judging whether Bosnia had anything to offer the U.S. or its allies, the concern for U.S. soldiers, journalists, and civilians also prevailed over the sufferings of the Bosnian people experiencing the worst of the tragedy. And it was no different for the international forces there. The fact is that “wars are fought not only with arms, but also with words.”⁹⁷ However, words can also lead to inaction. Therefore, it is important to understand the differences, if any, which existed in how the war in Bosnia was being portrayed compared to other conflicts going on around the same time, such as the war in Iraq. Differences in definition could elicit completely opposite reactions from the public.

When the war in Bosnia broke out, the Bush administration and media took the stance that this war did not represent a conflict which the U.S. could entangle itself in. For Bush, Bosnia was different from the Persian Gulf. In justifying U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf, Bush and the media acclaimed the ‘American’ ideals of justice and freedom to win public support. The presence of oil did not hurt either. These same ideals were not used in regard to Bosnia. Clinton took a different stance in saying, “I am appalled by what has happened there; I am saddened; I am sickened. And I know that our ability to do anything about it is somewhat limited.”⁹⁸ Neither presidents liked what was happening in Bosnia, nor were they initially willing to take a strong stance in proposing that action follow words. Essentially, the media was

⁹⁶ James J. Sadkovich, *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995*, (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 49.

⁹⁷ Kuusisto, Riikka. “Framing the Wars in the Gulf and in Bosnia: The Rhetorical Definitions of the Western Power Leaders in Action.” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (Sep 1998), 603.

⁹⁸ Kuusisto, 609.

a major factor in the Bosnian War in reporting what was happening to those who were watching it from afar. However, the media was limited in what it could show by forces within Bosnia and abroad, and the politicians of the U.S. put their own spin on what was taking place in order to justify their actions, or lack thereof.

United States Involvement

One major question often posed in situations requiring international response in today's world is, "What does our country have to gain by getting involved?" Until moral grounds were given for the United States to involve itself, the U.S. had nothing of strategic value to gain out of the war in Bosnia. The Soviet Union was gone, so there was no need for Yugoslavia to act as a thorn in the side of the Soviet Union and communist solidarity anymore. Bosnia also had little to offer the U.S. in terms of natural resources, like oil, which offered a stark contrast between the Persian Gulf War and the war in Bosnia. As the U.S. weighed the costs and benefits of engaging in this overseas crisis, it must have been difficult to see any scenario in which there might be something to gain. This was different for the Europeans who were not only closer in proximity but also saw this as their own special moment in history. "The Europeans, eager to show the force and muscle of a newly united continent, were anxious to play a decisive role on this issue. Later it would be clear that they had greatly overestimated their influence, but there was no doubt about their enthusiasm for the task at first."⁹⁹ The Europeans also greatly overestimated their unity, but they answered the call of the Secretary General for troops and were a part of UNPROFOR when it was established in February 1992 by Resolution 743 of the Security Council. And "because they had troops on the ground in Bosnia and the crisis was taking place

⁹⁹ Halberstam, 84-85.

in their backyards, the Europeans had significant stakes in the conflict.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, initially the U.S. took a back seat.

During this time, there were tough decisions for the U.S. as well with their own government in transition. Risk was involved for the U.S. in determining whether it should push the UN to try something different or let the UN and European Community continue to take the lead in Bosnia. The collapse of Yugoslavia and the start of the Bosnian War aligned with an election year (1992) and became a part of the debate between George H. W. Bush, who was running for reelection, and Bill Clinton. When Clinton won, a new administration with a new set of advisors moved in and had to decide whether to continue the prior administration’s policy in Bosnia or plot a new course. Therefore, the two administrations must be dealt with separately in terms of why they would or would not have wanted to get involved.

When events in Yugoslavia began to unravel in 1991, the possibility of intervening was extremely unattractive to the Bush administration, and the president and his advisers had a number of reasons for not wanting to involve themselves in the conflict. Dennis Ross, an American diplomat and author with extensive experience working with both republican and democrat presidencies, gave five reasons for why action in Bosnia was not desirable. First, the United States’ main focus was on the unraveling Soviet Union. Second, the administration felt that it was a European problem which should be solved by the Europeans. Third, there was a fear that intervention would require a strong military action which seemed unlikely to gain public approval at the time. Fourth, the administration was tired from having moved from one foreign policy situation to the next throughout the term. Lastly, because there had been so much emphasis placed on foreign policy, there were now many “domestic realities” which needed to

¹⁰⁰ Papayouanou, Paul A. “Intra-Alliance Bargaining and U.S. Bosnia Policy.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 41, No. 1, *New Games: Modeling Domestic-International Linkages* (Feb 1997), 104.

be tended to before committing the U.S. to yet another foreign endeavor.¹⁰¹ George C. Herring, a historian and leading authority on U.S. foreign relations, echoed all of these reasons and added two more: Yugoslavia was no longer geopolitically significant now that the Cold War had ended, and “memories of Vietnam still held sway.”¹⁰² These were legitimate reasons for a president to not want to get involved. Added to this was the complexity of an election which President Bush hoped to win. This was a less legitimate reason from a moral standpoint, but it still weighed into the equation due to the nature of U.S. politics. Regardless of whether one would consider these valid reasons, they influenced the Bush administration’s foreign policy.

The Secretary of State under President Bush, James Baker, revealed the U.S. position on Bosnia early on. He stated that “while the United States wanted to see Yugoslavia’s territorial integrity preserved, it would welcome any federal restructuring accepted by the republics.”¹⁰³ So the U.S. was willing to accept changes if they were unanimously agreed upon by all the republics. Baker also displayed an understanding of just how far things had deteriorated. “Logical argument simply will not work at this stage, when ethnic and nationalist passions suppressed by 45 years of Communist rule are exploding to the surface.”¹⁰⁴ Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, also presented the U.S. position clearly when he said, “We would be strongly opposed to any use of force or intimidation to settle political differences, change external or internal borders, block democratic change, or impose a nondemocratic unity.”¹⁰⁵ The use of force by any of the republics to effect change was deemed unacceptable, but the impending violence revealed these threats to be empty. The wording was strong but

¹⁰¹ Dennis Ross, *Statecraft: And How to Restore America's Standing in the World*. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 50-52.

¹⁰² George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations since 1776*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 924.

¹⁰³ Thomas L. Friedman, “Baker Urges End To Yugoslav Rift,” *The New York Times*, 22 June 1991, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Friedman, 1.

¹⁰⁵ David Binder, “United Yugoslavia Is U.S. Policy’s Aim,” *The New York Times*, 1 July 1991, A6.

noncommittal, and a Balkan crisis which had moved beyond resolving with a “logical argument” required a firm commitment to have any impact. Perhaps President Bush would have acted had he won a second term, instead threats were as far as his administration ventured. Thus, the situation continued to be unresolved leading into the Clinton Administration.

It also seemed odd that the Bush administration was not taking a strong stance on Bosnia due to the action taken in the Persian Gulf, though there are few comparisons which can be made between the Persian Gulf War and the war in Yugoslavia. The Bush Administration acted quickly and powerfully in responding to Saddam Hussein’s aggressive action against Kuwait. “Aggressors must not be allowed to profit from their conquests. That’s the principle President Bush soundly invoked to mobilize the world against Saddam Hussein’s seizure of Kuwait. The lesson seems to have been entirely lost on Slobodan Milosevic.”¹⁰⁶ The Bush Administration changed to a more timid position in Yugoslavia when it was determined that the US would only “try to use its influence to limit further expansion by the Serbs” despite their role as aggressors.¹⁰⁷ The administration continued to merely threaten while following the lead of the European Community. Eventually steps which did not require force were taken to try to stop the fighting. These took the forms of economic sanctions and an arms embargo against Yugoslavia, which were supported by the U.S. and Canada, and the recognition of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia as independent nations. However, the efforts continued to do little to stop the aggression of Milosevic and his Serbian Yugoslav army. The fact of the matter was that there was a stark difference between the United States’ position in the Persian Gulf and its position in Yugoslavia, and many at the time, and many today, point to the fact that the Persian Gulf possessed oil, and Bosnia did not.

¹⁰⁶ “Serbia vs. the New World Order,” *The New York Times*, 14 August 1991, A18.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas L. Friedman, “U.S. Policy on Yugoslavia Shifts to Curbing Serbs,” 27 September 1991, A6.

Whether the public is aware of it or not, national interest plays a large role in creating foreign policy. The U.S. has a large national interest in ensuring that oil continues to flow into the country. All one has to do is look at the U.S. public's response to high gas prices in order to understand that the price of oil has a strong impact on public sentiment. Individuals like Lee Hamilton, the Democratic Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs from 1993-1995, argued against lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia and laughed on television "when he noted that it was unfortunate for the Bosnians that unlike Kuwait there was no oil in their country which might have made Bosnia's resources, if not its population, a strategic interest to the US."¹⁰⁸ Many believed that "if Kuwait were not rich in oil, the West would not have rushed half a million soldiers to the Persian Gulf," and they were probably right.¹⁰⁹ National and strategic interests are essential ingredients in determining foreign policy. The United States had a strategic interest in Yugoslavia while Tito was in power because the Soviet Union still existed as competition. The Soviet Union's collapse took away the one real chip that Yugoslavia had in keeping the attention of the U.S. and its foreign policy.

Under the Bush administration, the U.S. leadership also over emphasized what its role in Yugoslavia would have to look like. Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff under Bush, said that intervention in Bosnia would require an "all-or-nothing" attack with clear objectives and a desire to win quickly.¹¹⁰ Haunted by the shadow of Vietnam, Powell could not get past the what-ifs. The most frightening of questions being "what would happen if the Serbs suffered heavy initial casualties from our high-tech weaponry, but instead of folding their hand and bowing to pressure, acted like the proud warrior nation they were long reputed to be, broke their forces down into smaller guerrilla-like units, and used the harsh terrain to their advantage

¹⁰⁸ Ali, 389.

¹⁰⁹ "What if Bosnia Had Oil?," *The New York Times*, 23 April 1992, A24.

¹¹⁰ Bert, 18.

and continued to attack their neighbors?”¹¹¹ The U.S. could not afford another Vietnam, so “Powell deliberately exaggerated the number of troops¹¹² that would be needed” in order to scare off advocates of intervention.¹¹³ The war was eventually brought to an end without this ‘all-or-nothing’ approach, so this was not entirely accurate. However, had the U.S. acted unilaterally in bringing an end to the conflict in former Yugoslavia, a ground force would have been required along with the air power it eventually did utilize, so Powell might have been proven correct. But the U.S. under Clinton chose to work with the international community instead, so this option never received a high priority.

Clinton received a lot of praise for the eventual end of the Bosnian War due to his position as president when it happened, but his administration was prone to equal amounts of unsupported talking points and inaction as the prior administration. Had it not been for the people Clinton eventually surrounded himself with, his administration may have failed in Yugoslavia as well. This was largely due to how much emphasis Clinton placed on foreign policy. When comparing the two presidents, Halberstam pointed to their stances on foreign policy as a major difference between the two. “For Bush, foreign policy had been his *raison d’être*. For Clinton, it was an inconvenience, something that might pull him away from his primary job at hand—domestic issues, above all the economy.”¹¹⁴ For Herring, all one had to do was look at two of his closest advisers and where their experience came from to understand this. “His top foreign policy advisers, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake and Secretary of State Warren Christopher, a protégé of Cyrus Vance, came mainly out of the liberal Democratic mold—burned by Vietnam, nervous about unilateral intervention, committed to working through

¹¹¹ Halberstam, 35-36.

¹¹² Estimates never slipped below 200,000 troops

¹¹³ Herring, 924.

¹¹⁴ Halberstam, 193.

the UN and other international organizations.”¹¹⁵ These advisers would not push Clinton on foreign policy. As previously examined, it was only when other advisers were brought in that Clinton’s administration took action in Bosnia.

The United States held a new and unique position entering the 1990s. As the world’s sole superpower, and possessing the largest, most powerful military, the U.S. possessed the military might to act alone in areas like Bosnia if a firm action was required. This placed it in a great position of power and influence. There were also a number of reasons for wanting to get involved. Wayne Bert found these by looking at members of the administration.

Peter Tarnoff, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs in the Clinton Administration gave three reasons the U.S. had an interest in events in Yugoslavia: to prevent the spread of fighting and the resultant instability that could threaten our allies or Russia; to stem the flow of refugees, provide humanitarian relief and stop the slaughter; and for the U.S. to maintain a leadership role in European affairs.¹¹⁶

Yet there was never the will to act or place U.S. soldiers into harm’s way. For instance, public opinion had soured quickly in Somalia in 1993 with footage of a U.S. soldier’s corpse being dragged through the street despite earlier public support for intervention. Nineteen soldiers died in Somalia, and most consider the mission there to be “in all ways a fiasco.”¹¹⁷ With this recent action in mind, public opinion could only be trusted to remember the most recent actions broadcast.

In Bosnia and elsewhere, Clinton made it clear that “when we commit ourselves to working with our neighbors, through NATO, through the U.N., through the Organization of American States, through any other group, that we have to be prepared not to always have our

¹¹⁵ Herring, 925-926.

¹¹⁶ Wayne Bert, *The Reluctant Superpower: United States’ Policy in Bosnia, 1991-1995*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 68-69.

¹¹⁷ Halberstam, 264.

way just prevail overnight.”¹¹⁸ Despite disagreeing with the way in which some decisions were being made, like Bush before him, Clinton was willing to acquiesce to the Europeans since the situation in Bosnia had the most potential to affect them. This humility in leadership earned the U.S. credibility and good standing internationally and ensured that the U.S. would not lose backing in other areas of the world where it possessed the backing of the UN and NATO such as the economic sanctions which existed against Iraq.

International power and perception were not the only objectives the U.S. under Clinton pursued. Another primary goal of the U.S. was to ensure that the crisis in the Balkans would not become “a broader European conflict, especially one that could threaten our NATO allies or undermine the transition of former Communist states to peaceful democracies.”¹¹⁹ Unrest in the Balkans, the “powder keg” of Europe, was not to be taken lightly. Events there had led to major European conflicts in the past, thus any effort to contain the conflict was encouraged. This was due to the U.S. and UN being concerned that the ethnic cleansing taking place in Bosnia “could have other practical consequences in other nearby regions where the same sorts of ethnic tensions exist[ed].”¹²⁰ Bosnia and Croatia were not the sole possessors of ethnically diverse populations with troubled pasts.

The other republics of former Yugoslavia had experienced population diffusion throughout their recent and distant histories leading to majority and minority ethnic populations being found within their borders, and these groups could just as easily have recalled accounts of

¹¹⁸ National Archives and Records Administration, “Interview With Foreign Journalists”, (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 12 July 1993), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 10, 2011) 1238.

¹¹⁹ National Archives and Records Administration, “The President's Radio Address and an Exchange With Reporters”, (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 28 February 1994), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 10, 2011) 329.

¹²⁰ National Archives and Records Administration, “The President's News Conference”, (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 26 April 1993), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 10, 2011) 654.

former sins committed by those outside their ethnic group. This was the case in all the republics of former Yugoslavia as it was in many of the nations that once fell behind the Iron Curtain, and the international community could not afford a domino effect taking place sending Europe once again into chaos and ruin. Thus, it was in everyone's best interests to see this unrest end here and find a way to bring the opposing groups to the table together to work out their differences and grievances and move toward reconciliation. Unfortunately, there is still much work to be done even today and will be for years to come. Currently, there remains a UN military presence in the country because of this. Since 2004, there has been a European Union led contingent of 1600 UN troops present within Bosnia with the possibility of that number rising to 7000 in case hostilities ever arose again. Known as EUFOR ALTHEA¹²¹, their charter lasts until November of 2011.

According to Clinton, the U.S. also wanted to ensure that NATO remained "a credible force for peace in the post-cold-war era."¹²² As "the world's greatest military alliance," NATO could not afford to sit idly by while the slaughter continued to happen in Bosnia without losing some credibility. And NATO's charter echoed the UN charter in its purpose "to settle any international dispute in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice [were] not endangered." Therefore, they agreed to assist the UN in monitoring that sanctions were being complied with at a meeting in Helsinki on July 10, 1992 which then set a precedent for them to assist throughout the ensuing four years of the war and after. They would later be put to work controlling the skies over Bosnia with the

¹²¹ EUFOR ALTHEA or European Union Force-Operation ALTHEA's job is to provide a military presence in order to contribute to the safe and secure environment, deny conditions for a resumption of violence, manage any residual aspect of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in BiH (also known as Dayton/Paris Agreement).

¹²² National Archives and Records Administration, "The President's Radio Address and an Exchange With Reporters", (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 28 February 1994), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 10, 2011), 329.

passing on October 9, 1992 of UN Security Council Resolution 781 creating a no-fly zone for non-NATO or UN flights and the eventual strategic bombing campaign against the Bosnian Serbs and Yugoslav army regulars on the ground in Bosnia.

It would be too harsh to say that the actions of those taking the lead at the end of the twentieth century in resolving situations like those in Bosnia and elsewhere made their decisions lightly. Clinton put it best towards the end of his time as president when he said that:

Too often we forget that 1989 was also a time of grave uncertainty about the future. There were doubts about NATO's future, reinforced later by its slowness to confront evil in Bosnia and Croatia. There were fears that the EU's efforts to come closer together would either fail or, succeeding, would fatally divide Europe and the United States. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe feared becoming a gray zone of poverty and insecurity. Many wondered if Russia was headed for a Communist backlash or a nationalist coup.¹²³

Essentially, the future was anything but certain in the 1990s. Nobody knew how events were going to unfold or whether the world would be a more stable and united place. Everyone could hope for that, but it was clear that the leaders of the “free world” were anything but certain that that was the future to come or even whether that was where their decisions were leading.

No conflict is ever the same, but there are lessons which can be learned and applied elsewhere. This should always be the stance of bodies like the United Nations, NATO and the United States. By always looking to improve themselves and the actions they take, they can pursue positive actions with more beneficiary returns in the future. Though much of this paper has focused on detailing what was missed by those in the international community in being able to determine what was to come in Yugoslavia, it is worth reiteration that, despite failures like these, there were also successes which should be examined in order to learn how better to deal with crises such as the Bosnia one in the future.

¹²³ National Archives and Records Administration, “Remarks on Receiving the International Charlemagne Prize in Aachen, Germany”, (Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 5 June 2000), <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/executive.html> (Accessed February 10, 2011), 1263.

The situation was not an easy one for those involving themselves with the pursuit of peace in Bosnia and the rest of a crumbling Yugoslavia. One major hurdle the international community faced was the recent collapse of the Soviet Union and an end to the Cold War. “It (Bosnia) ha[d] become for better or worse a paradigm for the problem of regional conflict management in the post-Cold-War era.”¹²⁴ The Cold War had defined international relations since the end of World War II. Thus, the crisis in Yugoslavia represented one of the first attempts at resolving a conflict in a Communist nation without the threat of the Soviet Union looming. The United States now stood alone as the sole superpower in the world, but the government was still hesitant to act out unilaterally. This was made clear early on by President Bush as he declared, “We are not the world’s policeman.”¹²⁵ After all, the country “was more powerful and more influential than ever before, but it was looking inward.”¹²⁶ With Clinton’s focus on domestic policy, there appeared to be little to be gained by the U.S. intervening in the Balkans. It was only after the moral grounds to intercede became politically feasible that Bosnia became interesting. Ultimately, Wayne Bert put it best in stating that the U.S. and others involved were “unprepared to pay the price necessary to prevent or stop” the genocide taking place in Yugoslavia or any of the other countries like Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia and Sudan that were experiencing conflict.¹²⁷

Positive Contributions from the U.S. in Ending the Conflict

Though the U.S. interceded late, they did eventually respond and help bring the conflict to an end. Had the U.S. continued to remain out of the conflict, the war may have gone on for

¹²⁴ Goldstein, Joshua S. and Jon C. Pevehouse. “Reciprocity, Bullying, and International Cooperation: Time-series Analysis of the Bosnia Conflict.” *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 3 (Sep 1997), 517.

¹²⁵ Papayouanou, 106.

¹²⁶ Halberstam, 75.

¹²⁷ Bert, 6.

even longer with the Europeans unable or unwilling to take action themselves. However, the U.S. only acted when it became politically feasible to break with the European consensus and pursue a new agenda. “In the fall of 1994, there may have been reason enough to stand firm with the allies because the domestic pressure before the midterm elections had temporarily changed the relative payoffs for collaboration on the administration’s preferred policy and collaboration on a compromise.”¹²⁸ Politics again played a factor in the decision to hold off on taking any action in Bosnia. Clinton only pushed for a change in procedure following the events at Srebrenica when “nonconfrontation became politically untenable.”¹²⁹ After this, he “threatened the allies in October and November 1994 that he would lift the arms embargo,” and the Europeans were quick to change their own policies and collaborate with the United States in bringing the war in Bosnia to an end.¹³⁰

The policy which Clinton pursued was a ‘lift-and-strike’ policy which did not include the use of ground troops as was initially thought would be required in a unilateral venture.¹³¹ The UN already had peacekeeping forces in place, so it was proposed that the arms embargo first be lifted so that Bosnia could arm and defend itself. This proposal had been pushed by Izetbegovic in Bosnia since the war first broke out. The second proposal was to begin airstrikes against Serb positions to be continued indefinitely until the Serbs gave up their ground in the hills above Bosnian cities like Sarajevo which had been under siege for the entirety of the war. Both of these proposals turned out to be successful actions.

The airstrikes proved especially successful for a number of reasons. Airstrikes at the end of the twentieth century were far different from those carried out in World War II.

¹²⁸ Papayouanou, 111.

¹²⁹ Power, 392-393.

¹³⁰ Papayouanou, 111.

¹³¹ Ibid, 107.

Indiscriminate bombings were no longer acceptable as a means to achieve military success. The very use of indiscriminate mortar fire by the Serbs against the civilian population in Bosnia helped to turn the international community against them. Therefore, the U.S. and its allies had to consider the cost of collateral damage into their strategy. U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Commander Michael Ryan was in charge of figuring out options to pursue in airstrikes at this time. His plan took the name Operation Deliberate Force and it disclosed much about what modern warfare and peacekeeping had to take into account in determining what policies were both acceptable and implementable.

“Ryan’s target selection reveals much about how his mission, prior planning, and political constraints shaped his concept of operations.”¹³² The first of Ryan’s objectives was to end the siege of Sarajevo. In order to achieve this objective, his secondary mission would be the specific targeting of military “forces and facilities that supported threats to the UN mission on the ground.” With these objectives in mind, the final mission would be for Ryan to obtain the approval of the UN to proceed.¹³³ After being approved, all military moves were to be observed closely to ensure that there could be no fallout over the situation. This put great pressure on commanders like Ryan. “Convinced that ‘every bomb was a political bomb...Ryan felt obliged to exercise such close control to minimize the risk of error,’ and ‘if mistakes were made, to ensure that they would be attributable to him—and to him alone.’”¹³⁴ Despite immense pressure, Ryan achieved his goals. Amazingly, the collateral damage was kept relatively low in Bosnia, setting a precedent for future actions in military engagements.

¹³² Paul C. Forage, “Bombs For Peace: A Comparative Study of the Use of Air Power in the Balkans.” *Armed Forces & Society* Vol. 28 (2002), 217.

¹³³ Ibid, 217.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 222.

One of the primary targets of the airstrikes was the supply lines of the Serbs. This action was taken after looking at the successes other armies had achieved in dividing an enemy from its supplies. For centuries this had been a successful ploy of militaries. The military leaders would have understood that “suddenly deprived of its supplies of men and material, a conventional army at war risks defeat by its adversaries, precisely the situation that confronted the BSA leadership in 1995.”¹³⁵ When their positions were finally attacked and their supplies cut off, they were presented with a situation they could not win.

The Serbs were simultaneously hit by a new offensive of Croatians and Bosnians. “On August 4, the Croats struck against the Serbs in the Krajina, heading toward Bihac in an offensive called Operation Storm. The Serb forces completely disintegrated and the Croat offensive became a major rout.”¹³⁶ These forces succeeded largely due to U.S. training and the psychological lift that came of it.¹³⁷ With massive precision bombing and vengeful Croatians and Bosnians now headed towards them, the Serbian leadership quickly decided to negotiate. The bloodshed was finally brought to an end, and the change in borders brought by the Croat-Bosnian offensive made Dayton possible.

Unfortunately, peace was only achieved after the complete destruction of the country and its people. Every facet of Bosnia had been devastated by the war. For one thing, most of the industries which had existed prior to the war breaking out were now rendered useless due to their need for spare parts from elsewhere in Bosnia and the other former republics of Yugoslavia. “Of its 4.3 million inhabitants (1991 figure), 1.2 million were refugees in host countries and another 1 million were internally displaced persons, not to mention the 250,000 estimated dead and missing, and the 200,000 wounded.” Bosnian Muslims were almost entirely driven out of

¹³⁵ Forage, 225.

¹³⁶ Halberstam, 339.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 336.

eastern Bosnia which was now occupied predominantly by Serbs. Most Serbs had been driven out of western Bosnia which was now largely Croatian and Muslim. Croats were highly diminished in number in central Bosnia which now became primarily Muslim. “Every major Bosnian city found itself devoid of a large part of its pre-war population or facing the prospect of partition (Mostar).”¹³⁸ The future of Bosnia looked grim at best following the tragedies of the past four years. Thus, it was little wonder that those who would now lead in the restoration and recovery of this broken nation had a momentous task ahead. In addition, even in the wake of tragedy, Bosnia again became the victim to those of the international community who thought they knew best in the pursuit of peace.

The Dayton Peace Accords

Hindsight tends to give historical narrative a sense of inevitability. But there was nothing predetermined about the outcome of the Bosnia negotiations. In August 1995, when they began, it was almost universally believed that they would fail, as all previous efforts had. And we knew that if we failed, the war would continue.¹³⁹ – Richard Holbrooke

The war in Bosnia officially ended with the initialing of the Dayton Peace Accords on November 21, 1995 in Dayton, Ohio. The documents were then signed in Paris on December 14 of the same year.¹⁴⁰ The agreement was made between the leaders of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (what remained of it). The agreement was excellent for the peace it represented, but there were problems with the way in which it was pursued. The largest problem presented itself in the fact that Tudjman and Milosevic were given a seat at the table. “For two aggressors who had wrought untold misery in

¹³⁸ Gallagher, 172.

¹³⁹ Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1999), xvii.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Department of State Website. Dayton Peace Accord.
<http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/bosnia/bosagree.html> (Accessed April 5, 2011).

Bosnia to be placed in such a position showed how flawed the 1995 settlement was.”¹⁴¹ Giving them a seat at the table gave credibility to their rules and revealed the international community and United States to be weak against aggressors. The other side of this argument, however, was that Tudjman and Milosevic were the only leaders that could represent the opposing elements at this time with the only strong alternatives being other individuals that were just as guilty. No one wanted Mladic or Karadzic at the negotiating table, or others like them, but they were the leaders of their respective constituencies so they had to be dealt with. Regardless, the following year, elections were held which allowed for nationalist elites to come to power over individuals that truly valued democracy. “Holding these elections in a demolished society, where the wounds of war were still fresh, revealed the poverty of vision and incoherence of the architects of Dayton and would store up endless trouble for the future.”¹⁴² The country and its government are still paying for this lack of insight.

Rebuilding Bosnia

After achieving peace and stability in the region, the international community next pursued its rebuilding. The work of rebuilding Bosnia following the war bore its share of problems. A clear bias emerged in the way in which the Western societies viewed how Bosnia and other nations should be shaped regardless of their history and culture. Gallagher, a British historian with an emphasis in religion and conflict in modern Europe, summed up this approach best in his book The Balkans after the Cold War. He said that “for good or for ill, Bosnia reflects the dominant approach to nation building, which consists of international support for a settlement between warring parties; help in setting up the country’s governing structures; and economic

¹⁴¹ Gallagher, 208.

¹⁴² Ibid, 208.

assistance to restructure the state, financial institutions, and civil society.”¹⁴³ This is the exact pattern that was used in Bosnia. The United States and its Western allies set up the peace agreement at Dayton. They then determined what form the government would take and held elections thinking more about immediacy than the long term effects of the elections’ outcomes. Finally, they continued to give economic assistance and political guidance. What they failed to recognize was that the structure of their own nations might not be the ideal structure for the rebuilding of Bosnia or other formerly communist states. Gallagher called this view by the West a “liberal internationalist world view” that made the assumption that future states would all look like their own “secular, democratic states.” Thus, their goal for Bosnia and others like it was not just to rebuild the state. Instead the Western powers would pursue the creation of “multiethnic, secular, and capitalist states” without regard to the “country’s past, its culture, or the particularities of recent history.”¹⁴⁴

By accepting that their states were the prime examples that others should be modeled off of, the international community denied the possibility to other nations of pursuing self-determination despite all the differences they might have possessed or how difficult the journey might be towards creating such a state and society. By doing so, they revealed themselves to be arrogant and incapable of finding the right solution for the future of Bosnia. Until this arrogance can be resolved, this will continue to be a problem in state building.

As a solution, McMahon suggests that “more attention should be paid to the similarities between Bosnia and other former Communist states and to what has helped these states move toward stability and democracy.”¹⁴⁵ The United States is unique in its composition as are the

¹⁴³ Patrice C. McMahon, “Rebuilding Bosnia: A Model to Emulate or to Avoid?,” *Political Science Quarterly* Vol. 119, No. 4 (2004-05), 558.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 558.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 591.

other Western nations with a history of democracy. Democracy is an excellent system of government, but there cannot be one, and only one way of creating democracy and the ideals it represents when nation building. Rebuilding without a thought as to the customs and traditions of the people in the nation being invested in exposes an arrogant view that the investor's way of doing things is in all ways superior to the national models. As the world becomes more globalized, and the more powerful countries and international bodies like the U.N. continue to intervene in the affairs of the less powerful, there must be a movement towards learning about and appreciating the differences other cultures possess. Future policy must not be shaped by politicians alone, but also by city and regional planners and those in the liberal arts who have invested time and energy in understanding the customs and cultures that are being affected.

Lessons for the Future

Justice is a popular word in politics today. Politicians tout it as a cornerstone of their campaigns. College campuses, like Cal Poly, host events which encourage dialogue about social justice issues. News agencies report daily the wrongs being committed around the world. Even Hollywood has taken part in the move for justice by making movies focusing on actual tragedies which have occurred (Hotel Rwanda), or making their audience aware of issues like racism which continue to exist in our society today (Crash). Talk of justice and injustice is all around, however the ability to internationally intervene in conflicts where injustices are taking place is a bureaucratic nightmare. The Bosnian War was the source of numerous injustices at the end of the twentieth century. The response by those who charged themselves with bringing justice to the situation was slow at best, and thousands of people died as a result of this sluggish response. Thus it is necessary to understand that the positive outcomes of the international effort to end the war should not overshadow the atrocities that came before it. The Bosnian War is a part of

history now, and it is a history which must be learned from in order to ensure it does not happen again.

The most significant lesson which must be taken from the Bosnian War is that inaction and ignorance can be as damaging as taking sides, if not more so. Once the international community took a role in negotiating a peace, they became responsible, at least in part, for what would follow. By then declaring neutrality in the matter, they eliminated their ability to dissuade aggression or even find an aggressor. Thus, the war was allowed to escalate. There were reasons for not wanting to get involved—Balkans as powder keg of Europe, fear of new Vietnam, was a civil war, ancient hatreds, etc. However, it would have been morally repugnant to stand back and let the people of the Balkans just kill each other off, even more so with the presence of genocide.

Another lesson to be learned is that the eradication of injustice requires that risks be taken. The Bosnian War ended at Dayton because the U.S. took a risk. More risks like this must be taken in the future. In order to accomplish this, politicians and others in positions of influence must begin pursuing and fighting for what is right more often than what is merely popular at the time. This is understandably difficult, especially in a democracy where public opinion can make or break a career, but Clinton and the negotiators at Dayton made choices which resulted in ending genocide in Bosnia. And ending genocide and other crimes against humanity are always worth the risk. The greatest risk taker, Holbrooke, fought for and pursued the peace process through to its end only to be rejected by the administration following Dayton, but he helped save generations of Bosnians in the process and is the hero of this story in history.

Since November 21, 1995, “Dayton” has entered the language as shorthand for a certain type of diplomacy—the Big Bang approach to negotiations: lock everyone up until they reach agreement...Those considering other Daytonos should proceed with caution. It is a high-wire act without a safety net. Much work must precede the plunge into an all-or-

nothing environment. The site must be just right. The goals must be clearly defined. A single host nation must be in firm control, but it is high risk for the host, whose prestige is on the line. The consequences of failure are great. But when the conditions are right, a Dayton can produce dramatic results.¹⁴⁶

Hopefully more Daytonos are on the horizon for ending future conflicts. No situation will ever be just like Bosnia again, however the risk and determination of the leaders at Dayton proved that even complex conflicts can eventually end in peace, even if that peace is tenuous.

The massacre which took place at Srebrenica might have looked different had leaders been willing to take a risk. The troops on the ground bore some responsibility, but the greater issue was the lack of commitment on the part of their leaders in the UN. The number of troops which were initially sent represented a lack of will on the part of the international community to send a message that aggression would not be tolerated. By pulling out of the safe zone they sent an even clearer message that they could be pushed around as the UN placed more value on its troops than the Bosnian civilians being murdered. Instead, Sadkovich determined that “after appropriating the crisis and containing the violence, the West let the Yugoslavs rot.”¹⁴⁷

A specific lesson for historians is that studies of the past should not distract from the significance of current events. Historians failed the people of Yugoslavia as a whole by not speaking out before and after the war broke out. Investigating the role of historians in Yugoslavia, historian Norman M. Naimark was shocked by how “most historians of the region retreated from active commentary on events” despite knowing the most about its past, present, and future.¹⁴⁸ Historians already have a difficult job in remaining free from bias in their research. However, as the most educated on the past of these areas they had the responsibility to speak out and warn of what had come before and could be again. Knowledge and interest in the

¹⁴⁶ Holbrooke, 232.

¹⁴⁷ Sadkovich, 195.

¹⁴⁸ Norman M. Naimark and Holly Case, eds. *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), xvi.

past should not make one unaware or disinterested in the present and future. Historians oftentimes are at their best when they can interpret the past in order to better understand the present and educate and inform others that will impact the future. The international community could have benefited from such voices prior to making decisions.

Another lesson for policy makers in the future will be to surround themselves with individuals that have knowledge of the histories and cultures of the people their decisions will affect. The world is a diverse place made up of even more diverse people. Understanding and appreciating the differences that exist between one's own culture and those of others will lead to healthier interactions between people.

The final lesson is that the United States and other Western powers must humble themselves by admitting that their way of doing things is not always the best model. Bosnia suffered, and continues to suffer, in part because of the arrogance of the U.S. and UN. By failing to acknowledge Bosnia's history or culture as a relevant part of the process, the international community responded slowly to the collapse of Yugoslavia and next pursued a biased agenda in terms of how they saw the country being put back together after the war. Future state-building efforts must take into account the differences that other countries possess. In doing so, it will become possible to achieve stability more quickly as investigated and educated decisions are made. Thus, it will be important for future generations of foreign policy makers to learn from the mistakes of their predecessors and approach future regional conflicts with sensitivity and a desire to learn from the groups involved. However, they must also be prepared to act with firmness and take risks in leadership if they desire see their actions achieve success.

Conclusion

Despite never resolving the grievances of World War II, Yugoslavia had made great leaps towards peaceful coexistence in a heterogeneous state. “Yugoslavia’s 1981 census recorded about 640,000 ethnically mixed marriages, often made between Serbs and Croats despite the hostilities that have dominated relations between the two groups for decades”¹⁴⁹ Yet this seemed to matter little to individuals like Tudjman, Milosevic, and other leaders in the republics who saw the world around them as they wanted to. While still in the diplomatic stage of disagreement Tudjman insisted that “we have had enough experience to show us that no other form of government can exist here because Serbs and Croats belong not only to two different nationalities, but to two different cultural spheres.”¹⁵⁰ Statements like these reflected a posture of already having given up on coexistence. The population dynamics of these republics reflected something more hopeful, however. This would be the case even after war broke out. When war spread to Bosnia, much of the ethnically diverse population suffered together. “Close to 80,000 Serbs shared the siege of Sarajevo with their Croat and Muslim neighbors. Indeed, throughout the war thousands fought and died for the idea of a multinational, cosmopolitan, pluralist society—an idea Bosnia embodied for centuries.”¹⁵¹

Unfortunately, once events have occurred there is nothing that can be done to change them. The dissolution of Yugoslavia was not immediate, just as the war which spread to Bosnia did not begin overnight. The progression towards war was a gradual one. Even after war broke out, there was time for the international community to step in and respond. Instead, the war was allowed to rage on for four years leading to thousands of lives being cut short. Startlingly,

¹⁴⁹ Chuck Sudetic, “As Formal End Nears, Some Lament Passing of the Yugoslavia They Knew,” *The New York Times*, 15 January 1992, A3.

¹⁵⁰ Chuck Sudetic, “As Croatia Goes, Will All Yugoslavia?,” *The New York Times*, 5 May, 1990, 4.

¹⁵¹ Ali, 372.

“genocide occurred after the Cold War; after the growth of human rights groups; after the advent of technology that allowed for instant communication; after the erection of the Holocaust Museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C.”¹⁵²

As the world continues to change, the UN, NATO, the EU, the U.S. and all other nations and collaborations of nations will have to change with it. The timid way in which the UN, NATO, the EC and the U.S. acted did not fit the Bosnian War. Different approaches must be taken when negotiations fail or stall, and the UN allowed too much time to pass before moving on to new and firmer actions against known aggressors. That time is what allowed thousands of Bosnian citizens to die and revealed the UN to be weak and unwilling to act. The U.S., and specifically the Bush and then Clinton administrations, became complicit to the UN’s inaction by not reasoning harder with those in charge in the UN, or more simply, not being interested enough to really care what was happening in former Yugoslavia. Unilateral action would never have worked, and the U.S. and other countries have seen what can happen when they choose to take the burden entirely on themselves. However, injustices were taking place with the full knowledge of the nations that held positions as peacekeepers in Bosnia, and they continued for nearly four years without significantly being checked. Genocide again transpired on Europe’s soil, and the leaders of the intervening international bodies allowed it to happen. Little appeared to have changed since the 1940s as international leaders again practiced appeasement when negotiating with determined men driving questionable agendas.

In conclusion, the UN, NATO, and the U.S. failed to successfully bring about a swift end to the Bosnian War which allowed Europe to experience genocide once more on its soil. Though prepared to intervene in regional conflicts and possessing the means to act with strength, the international community, especially its European members, lacked unity and the resolve to

¹⁵² Power, 503.

punish the aggressors. Thus, hostilities escalated without restraint, and the intervention was initially rendered impotent. Changes in leadership, tactics, and the tragedy at Srebrenica eventually led to a strong, united international effort to turn back the aggressors and force a peace, but by that time hundreds of thousands were dead and millions were displaced. The Dayton Peace Accords brought peace to the region, but the dream of heterogeneity in Bosnia had largely been crushed. Therefore, the intervention in Bosnia was largely a failed effort with its only success being that it eventually ended the war.

Bosnia's importance now resides in its place in history as an event which can be learned from in order to ensure that other such conflicts never happen again. "The war in Bosnia took a terrible toll, both on the people of that small country and on the international institutions whose intervention efforts were so problematic. Nothing can change that history. But by better understanding what happened, and specifically by bringing the tools of science to bear (in addition to the more common methods of journalism and history), we hope to contribute to the better management of future regional conflicts."¹⁵³ Sadly, mistakes have continued to be made by both the U.S. and U.N. in recent years, and terrible tragedies continue to occur around the world, yet there is still hope for change. More "Daytons" can come to pass. If the nations that desire peace truly investigate the positive and negative realities of their decisions in the past and the history and culture of the places they continue to impact in an effort to move forward, then they will achieve more positive results in future engagements. Perfection will never be achievable in resolving conflicts, nor should it be expected, but the humble pursuit of understanding those affected and where they have come from must become an integral part of policy making. There is much still to learn from what occurred in the dissolution of Yugoslavia

¹⁵³ Goldstein, 528.

and the Bosnian War, and perhaps a most sincere hope for those who make decisions is that they will begin to take responsibility for their actions and be willing to learn from the past and take risks for their future. In reality, the Bosnian War is still influencing leaders' ideologies when it comes to international bodies inserting themselves into national conflicts and it will continue to be used that way for years to come.

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